# ALLWORTH ABBEY;

OR,

# EUDORA.

BY


## MRS. EMMA D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "THE MISSING BRIDE; OR, MIRIAM, THE AVENGER," "A BEAUTIFUL FIEND," "HOW HE WON HER," "A NOBLE LORD," "TRIED FOR HER LIFE," "DESERTED WIFE," "CHANGED BRIDES," "LADY OF THE ISLE," "BRIDAL EVE," "CRUEL AS THE GRAVE," "THE WIDOW'S SON," "VIVIA," "THE LOST HEIRESS," "FAMILY DOOM," "THE ARTIST'S LOVE," "GIPSY'S PROPHECY," "HAUNTED HOMESTEAD," "FALLEN PRIDE," "VICTOR'S TRIUMPH," "THE CURSE OF CLIFTON," "SPECTRE LOVER," "MAIDEN WIDOW," "FORTUNE SEEKER," "THE TWO SISTERS," "FAIR PLAY," "FATAL MARRIAGE," "PRINCE OF DARKNESS," "THE BRIDE'S FATE," "MOTHER-IN-LAW," "THREE BEAUTIES," "INDIA," "DISCARDED DAUGHTER," "WIFE'S VICTORY," "LOVE'S LABOR WON," "RETRIBUTION," "THE LOST HEIR OF LINLITHGOW," "THE BRIDE OF LLEWELLYN," "CHRISTMAS GUEST," ETC.


*"I will not think of him—I'll pace*
*This old ancestral hall,*
*And dream of that illustrious race*
*Whose pictures line the wall.*
*And from their dark and haughty eyes,*
*Though faded now and dim,*
*A better spirit shall arise,*
*I will not think of him."*—MRS. C. A. WARFIELD.


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THIS WORK IS DEDICATED,

AS A SLIGHT TESTIMONIAL OF

THE HIGHEST ESTEEM AND WARMEST AFFECTION

OF

THE AUTHOR,

E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH.

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# ALLWORTH ABBEY.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE FEARFUL WARNING.

"She stood once more in the halls of pride,
And the light of her beauty was deified,
And she seemed to the eyes of men a star,
Lovely but lonely—flashing but far.

"She fixed his gaze with her fearful spell,
And the book from his failing fingers fell;
While her low voice hissed in his shuddering ear,
'We've met at last, slave! Dost thou fear?'"

A FEW years only have elapsed since the public mind was electrified by the discovery of a strange tissue of crimes, through which had perished within the space of twelve months every member of a noble family, and in which was implicated the honor of one of England's haughtiest peers and the life of one of her loveliest daughters, and finally, which added a recent and thrilling domestic drama to those ancient histories and ghostly traditions that have long rendered ALLWORTH ABBEY the resort of the curious, and the terror of the ignorant and the superstitious.

The principal circumstances were made sufficiently public at the time of the discovery; some at least of the guilty parties were brought to justice, and the effigy of the chief criminal may even now be seen in a certain celebrated "Room of Horrors." But much also remained enveloped in mystery, for, underlying the bare facts that were openly proved, there was a secret history, stranger, more atrocious

and more appalling, even, than those ruthless crimes for which the convicted felons suffered.

The knowledge of this secret history came to me in a singular manner; and with the purpose of showing over what fatal pitfalls the most innocent feet may sometimes stray, I proceed to relate the story, entreating my readers to remember, amidst its strangest revelations, that "nothing is so strange as reality," and nothing more incredible than truth :—

ALLWORTH ABBEY, the scene of these events, is one of the most ancient monuments of monastic history left standing in the United Kingdom. The precise date of its foundation is lost in the dimness of far-distant ages, and remains to this day a disputed point among learned antiquarians.

It is a vast and gloomy pile of Gothic architecture, situated at the bottom of a deep and thickly-wooded glen, surrounded by high hills, that even at noonday cast a sombre shadow over the whole scene, which is one of the wildest, loneliest, and most picturesque to be found on the northwest coast of England. The surrounding country may be called mountainous, from the imposing height of the hills, and the profound depth of the vales.

Nothing can be more secluded, solitary, and sombre than the aspect of this place. The grim old Abbey, lurking at the bottom of its deep dell, reflected dimly in its dark lake, overshadowed by its tall trees, and closely shut in by high hills, is just the object to depress and awe the beholder, even though he never may have heard the fearful stories connected with the place.

Allworth Abbey is rich in historical associations and traditional lore. Its cloisters have sheltered kings; its walls have withstood sieges; it possesses its haunted cell, its spectre monk and phantom maiden.

In the reign of Henry the Church-burner and Wife-killer, Allworth Abbey was the home of a rich fraternity of Bene-

dictine monks. And at the time of that tremendous visitation of wrath which overswept the land, when

> "The ire of an infuriate king
> Rode forth upon destruction's wing,"

Allworth Abbey was besieged and sacked by a party of soldiers under Lord Leaton, a baron of ancient lineage in the North of England, and of great merit in the estimation of King Henry Bluebeard. The abbot was slain at the altar, the brethren were put to the sword, the Abbey was given to the flames, and the lands conferred by the King upon the conqueror.

Lord Leaton rebuilt the ruined portions of the Abbey, adapted it as a family residence, and constituted it the principal seat of his race, in whose possession it remained from that time until the date of those strange household mysteries that I am about to disclose.

The last male representative of the Leatons of Allworth was Henry, Lord Leaton, whose name has since become so painfully memorable. With an ancient title, an ample fortune, a handsome person, well-cultivated mind, and amiable disposition, he married, early in life, a fair woman, every way worthy of his affections. Their union was blest by one child, Agatha, "sole daughter of his house," who, at the opening of this story, had just attained her eighteenth year.

It is scarcely possible for a human being to be happier than was Lord Leaton at this time. In the prime of his manly life, blessed with a fair wife in the maturity of her matronly beauty, and a lovely daughter, just budding into womanhood, endowed with an ancient title, an immense fortune, and a wide popularity, Lord Leaton was the most contented man in England.

It was not even a drawback to his happiness that there was no male heir to his titles and estates, for in Malcolm

Montrose, the betrothed of his daughter, he had found a son after his own heart.

Malcolm Montrose, and Norham, his younger brother, were the sons of Lord Leaton's half sister, who had married a poor but proud Scotch laird. Their parents were now both dead. From their father they had inherited little more than an ancient name, a ruined tower, and a blasted heath. It was therefore only by the assistance of Lord Leaton, that Malcolm was enabled to enter the University of Oxford, and Norham to obtain a commission in the army.

It was the high character of Malcolm Montrose that commended him so favorably to the esteem of Lord Leaton, and induced his lordship to promote the betrothal between that young gentleman and the young heiress of Allworth; for be it known that the engagement was rather of Lord Leaton's making than of the young pair's seeking.

They loved each other as brother and sister, nor dreamed of the possibility of a stronger affection. They had naturally and easily glided into the views of Lord and Lady Leaton, and had at length plighted their hands, in perfect good faith, if not with the passionate love of which neither young heart had as yet any experience. One of the conditions of the betrothal was, that upon his marriage with the heiress, Malcolm Montrose should assume the name and arms of Leaton. It was also hoped that, in the event of the death of Lord Leaton, his son-in-law might obtain the reversion of the title.

It was soon after this solemn betrothal, that took place in the spring of 185–, that Malcolm Montrose took leave of his friends, and left England for an extended tour of the Continent.

Up to this time the life of Lord Leaton and his family had been one of unbroken sunshine. From this time the clouds began to darken around them.

On the day succeeding the departure of Malcolm, Lord

Leaton received a letter from India, informing him of the death of his younger brother, who had left England many years previous to seek his fortune under the burning sun of Hindostan. The large fortune he had apparently found was the love of a beautiful native girl, whom he had secretly married, and who, in ten months after, in the same hour, made him a widower and the father of a female infant—the little Eudora, who, under her father's care, had managed to grow up even in that deadly climate. But now that father had fallen a victim to the fatal fever of the country, and his daughter Eudora was left destitute.

Lord Leaton had been too long separated from his brother to feel keenly his death; his fraternal affection took a more practical turn than grief; he lost no time in procuring a proper messenger to send out to India for the purpose of bringing back his niece, who, as the only child of his sole brother, was, after Agatha, the heiress-presumptive of his estates.

As soon as Lord Leaton had despatched his messenger, he set out with his family to visit Paris. They took the first floor of a handsome house in a fashionable quarter of the city; but the circumstance of their being in mourning for Lord Leaton's brother caused them to live in great retirement.

This was about the time that the concerted revolution in the Papal States had been discovered and suppressed, and when some of the noblest Romans had fallen on the scaffold, and others had been driven into exile. Among those whose fate excited the liveliest sympathy were the Prince and Princess Pezzilini. The prince fell gloriously in the cause of civil and religious liberty, and the princess was said to have perished in the flames when the Palace Pezzilini was burned by the mob. This was the common talk of Paris when Lord Leaton and his family arrived there.

It was within a few days after their settlement in their apartments, that the attention of Lord and Lady Leaton

was attracted by a lady who frequently passed them on the grand staircase. She was a tall, fine-formed, fair woman, of great beauty, clothed in mourning, and wearing the aspect of the profoundest sorrow. No one could have seen her without becoming interested—no one could have passed her without a backward glance. She was sometimes attended by a stout, dark-complexioned, middle-aged man, whose manner towards her seemed half way between that of a good uncle and a faithful and trusted domestic.

The feminine curiosity of Lady Leaton had been so much excited by this mysterious lady and her strange attendant, that she had at length inquired about her of the old portress of the house. And it was from that garrulous personage Lady Leaton learned to her astonishment that the beautiful stranger was no other than the Princess Pezzilini, who had *not* perished in the burning Palace of Pezzilini, but who had made her escape with the assistance of a faithful servant, Antonio Mario, who, for her better security, had circulated the report of her death, while he bore her off to France. She was now living on the fourth floor of that house, in great poverty and seclusion, attended only by her faithful servant, Antonio Mario.

So much Lady Leaton learned from the portress; but she lost no time in delicately seeking the acquaintance of the beautiful and unfortunate exile.

She found the Princess Pezzilini very accessible to respectful sympathy. She learned from her some further particulars of her history—among other matters, that she had succeeded in securing from the burning palace a box of valuable family documents and a casket of costly family jewels. As, however, these jewels were heirlooms, she was unwilling to part with the least one of them until extreme want should actually compel her to do so; hence with almost boundless wealth at her command, she chose to live in poverty and privation. This was her story.

The lively imagination of Lady Leaton was affected by

her beauty, sensibility and accomplishments. The good and benevolent heart of Lord Leaton was touched by her misfortunes, her courage, and her resignation. And the end of it was that they invited her to return with them to England, and make Allworth Abbey her home until the clouds that lowered over her House should be dispersed, and the sun should shine forth again.

They spent the autumn in Paris, and returned to Allworth Abbey just in time to prepare for Christmas.

And it was on Christmas-eve that the messenger to India returned, bringing with him Eudora Leaton. It was evening, and the family circle of Allworth Abbey, consisting of Lord and Lady Leaton, Miss Leaton, and the Princess Pezzilini, were assembled in the drawing-room, when Eudora was announced.

She entered, and her extreme beauty at once impressed the whole company.

It was a beauty that owed nothing to external circumstances, for she had arrived weary, sorrowful, and travel-stained; yet it was a beauty that sank at once into the very soul of the beholder, filling him with a strange delight. She was of medium height, and slender yet well-rounded form. Her graceful little head was covered with shining, jet-black ringlets, that fell around a face lovely as ever haunted the dream of poet or painter. Her features were regular; her complexion was a pure, clear olive, deepening into a rich bloom upon the oval cheeks, and a richer still upon the small full lips; her eyebrows were perfect arches of jet, tapering off to the finest points at the extremities; her eyes were large, dark and liquid, and fringed by the longest and thickest black lashes; her nose was small and straight; her mouth and chin faultlessly carved; her throat, neck and bust were rounded in the perfect contour of beauty; the whole outline of her form was ineffably beautiful. A poet would have said that her most ordinary motions might have

been set to music, but to no music more melodious than the tones of her voice.

Such was the beautiful young Asiatic that stood trembling before her strange English relatives in the drawing-room of Allworth Abbey on Christmas-eve.

Lord Leaton was the first to arise and greet her.

"Welcome to England, my dearest Eudora," he said, embracing her fondly; "think that you have come to your own home, and to your own father and mother, for after our daughter Agatha we shall love you best of all the world, as after her, you know, you are the next heiress of our name and estates."

"Dear uncle, give me but a place in your heart next to my cousin Agatha, and—let the rest go," said Eudora, in a voice vibrating with emotion.

Lord Leaton then formally presented his niece to her aunt and cousin, and to the Princess Pezzilini, all of whom received the beautiful young stranger with the utmost kindness and courtesy.

Agatha, in particular, seemed delighted with the acquisition of a congenial companion in her charming Indian cousin.

The evening passed delightfully; but for the sake of the weary traveller, the family party supped and separated at an unusually early hour.

It was soon after Lady Leaton had retired to her dressing-room that she heard a light tap at her door, and to her surprised exclamation of "Come in," entered the Princess Pezzilini.

"You will pardon me for intruding upon you at this hour, but you know what great reason I have to be devoted to your service, Lady Leaton, and you know the force of my faith in presentiments. It is a presentiment that forces me to your presence to-night," said the princess in a mournful voice.

"Madame, I thank you earnestly for the interest you

deign to take in my welfare; but—I do not understand you," said Lady Leaton, in surprise.

"And I do not understand myself; but I must speak, for the power of prophecy is upon me! Lady Leaton, *beware of that Asiatic girl!*"

"Madame!" exclaimed Lady Leaton, in extreme surprise.

"Yes, I know what you would say: she is your niece, the daughter of your husband's brother. But I tell you that she is of the treacherous, cruel, and deadly Indian blood! I have watched her thoughts through this evening. I noted her look when Lord Leaton told her that she was the next heiress after Agatha. And I tell you that the gaze of the deadly cobra-di-capella of her native jungles is not more fatal than the glance of that Indian girl!"

"Madame, in the name of Heaven, what mean you?" exclaimed Lady Leaton, in vague alarm.

The voice of the princess sank to its deepest tones, as she answered:

"The deadly upas-tree of the Indies suffers nothing to live in its dread neighborhood. If you could transplant such a tree from an Indian plain to a fair English park, as it should grow and thrive, all beautiful life would wither under its poisonous breath, until nothing should remain but a blasted desert, and the deadly upas-tree should be all in all! Lady Leaton, beware of the young Indian sapling transplanted to your fair English park!"

"Madame, you frighten me!" exclaimed Lady Leaton.

"No; I only mean to warn you! I spoke from an irresistible impulse. And having spoken, I have no more to say but to bid you good-night," said the Italian, lifting the hand of Lady Leaton to her lips, and then withdrawing, and leaving her ladyship plunged in deep thought.

## CHAPTER II.

### HORRIBLE SUSPICIONS.

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.—*Shakspeare.*

THE beautiful Asiatic girl soon won her way into every heart in the household. No one could meet the soft, appealing gaze of her large, dark, Oriental eyes, or hear the plaintive tones of her low, deep, sweet voice, without feeling powerfully drawn towards her. No one could be with her long without seeing that the angel form was tenanted by an angel spirit, too.

Eudora became the darling of the household. And yet, from all events that quickly followed, it would seem that the previsions of the Princess Pezzilini had been true.

First of all the father of the family, Lord Leaton, a man in the early prime of life and the full enjoyment of the finest health, sickened with a strange disease that baffled all the skill and science of his medical attendants. The most competent nurses were engaged to take their turns day and night at his bedside.

The ladies of the family also vied with each other in their attentions to the invalid. But it was observed that in his moments of greatest suffering, he would bear no one to approach him except his niece Eudora.

This might be explained by the circumstances that Eudora's presence was very soothing, her step was noiseless, her motions smooth, her touch soft, her voice low, and her gaze gentle; and all this had a very calming and subduing effect upon the irritable invalid. And thus Eudora became almost a fixture beside his couch. And all who loved Lord Leaton were grateful to the gentle

girl, who patiently resigned her daily recreations and her nightly repose to devote herself to him.

All except the Princess Pezzilini, who was observed to shake her head and murmur to herself—

"The fascination of the cobra-di-capella!"

But no one paid attention to the murmured remarks of the lady, especially as even she herself did not escape the charms of Eudora's presence, but frequently fell under the sweet spell that bound all hearts to the beautiful girl.

At length, one night, Eudora, worn out with fatigue, was ordered to go to her bed. She mixed the sleeping-draught for her uncle, put it in the hands of her aunt, and retired to her room. Lady Leaton was left alone to watch by the bedside of her husband.

She sat the sleeping potion down upon a stand near the head of the bed, until Lord Leaton should awake from the light doze into which he had fallen, and she went out to her dressing-room to change her dress for a warmer wrapper, in which to sit up and watch the invalid.

It was while she stood before the looking-glass which was opposite the door and reflected a portion of the adjoining room, that Lady Leaton saw the shadow of a female figure glide along the wall, and at the same moment heard the rustle of a silk dress.

She immediately turned and entered the chamber, but found no one there. Lord Leaton had just awakened and turned over.

"Has any one been here?" inquired her ladyship.

"No one at all," he answered.

"It was fancy, then," muttered the lady to herself, as she gave the sleeping-draught to her husband.

He drank it to the dregs; yet it did not seem to produce the usual effects. The patient could not get to sleep; on the contrary, he grew more and more restless, and soon became violently ill.

Lady Leaton, in alarm, aroused the servants, and des-

patched a messenger to Poolville, the adjoining village, for their medical attendant, who immediately hastened to the bedside of his patient. But the utmost skill of the physician was unavailing, for, before morning, Lord Leaton expired.

It was then that the medical attendant felt it his duty to declare to the grieving widow that her husband had died from the effects of a virulent poison, and to demand an investigation by the coroner's jury.

This would have been a terrible blow to Lady Leaton could she have been made to receive it. But she indignantly repudiated the idea.

What, *he* poisoned?—*he*, Lord Leaton, who was so kind-hearted that he would not have crushed a worm in his path, or killed a wasp that stung him?—*he*, who was so universally beloved and honored that he had not one enemy in the wide world?—*he*, in whose premature death no one could have a benefit, but in whose beneficent life thousands possessed the deepest interest?—*he* taken off by foul means? The idea was too preposterous as well as too dreadful to believe.

No; the horror of such a suspicion was not added to the unspeakable sorrow of the widow.

But, as the doctor was firm in his purpose of having a *post-mortem* examination and a coroner's inquest, of course both had to be held. Nothing decisive, however, was elicited. No trace of poison was found either in the body of the deceased or in the glasses from which he had drank, or anywhere else.

The single suspicious circumstance of Lady Leaton's seeing the shadow of a female on the wall, and hearing the rustle of a silk dress in her husband's chamber, was disproved by a separate examination of each member of the household, in which it was clearly shown that every one was at that hour in bed. And Lady Leaton herself admitted that her imagination might have deceived her.

The verdict of the coroner's inquest, therefore, was that the deceased died from natural causes.

Lord Leaton had died too suddenly to have made a will, but his wishes were so well understood by Lady Leaton, that she lost no time in carrying them into effect. She wrote to Rome to Malcolm Montrose, informing him of the sudden death of his uncle, and requesting him to come immediately to England. She wrote, also, to Norham Montrose, who was absent with his regiment in Ireland, giving him the same fatal intelligence, and inviting him to join his brother at Allworth Abbey by a certain day.

Malcolm, though the farthest from the scene of action, was the first to obey the summons. He hastened to England, and, without resting a single night on his journey, hurried to Allworth Abbey.

It was near the close of a stormy day in March that he got out of the stage-coach at Abbeytown, and leaving his luggage to the care of the landlord of the "Leaton Arms," set out to walk the short distance to the Abbey. He reached the top of the eastern range of hills that surrounded the Abbey just as the sun, setting behind the western hills, cast the whole dell into deep shadow.

Never had the aspect of that sombre place seemed so gloomy and depressing. The huge collection of buildings comprising the Abbey lurking at the bottom of the deep dell, reflected dimly in its dark lake, overshadowed by its gigantic old trees, enclosed by its lofty hills, and cast into the deepest shade by the sinking of the sun behind those hills, was well calculated to awe the traveller, even though he might not have—as Malcolm had—a personal and tragic interest in the scene.

A few moments he spent in contemplating the picture, and then rapidly descended the precipitous path leading down to the bottom of the dell. At the foot of the precipice was the gamekeeper's lodge and the principal park

gate. He passed this, and took the straightest line to the Abbey.

He passed one more gate and entered the grounds, immediately around the house. A short walk brought him to the outer banks of the shaded lake. An avenue of elms swept right and left around this lake and led up to the centre front entrance to the Abbey. He took the right-hand walk, and proceeding at a rapid pace, soon found himself before the main entrance.

Here the first object that arrested his attention was the funeral hatchment suspended over the doorway. A sigh was given to the memory of his uncle, and then he went up the broad stairs, and knocked at the great folding oak door of the main entrance. It was opened by the aged porter, who welcomed him respectfully, and ushered him at once into the library, while he went to announce the arrival to the widowed Lady Leaton.

While waiting the entrance of his hostess, Malcolm Montrose strolled to the front window and looked out upon the scene—the dark lake immediately under the walls of the Abbey, rendered darker still by the overhanging branches of its encircling trees, and the lofty sides of its surrounding hills, behind which the full moon was now rising.

While Malcolm gazed moodily upon the scene, his attention was attracted by a female form, clothed in black and gliding like a spirit among the trees, that bordered the still lake. He could not at first see her face, but the ineffable grace of her movements fascinated his eyes to follow her every motion. At length she turned, and he caught an instant's glimpse of a dark face, which, even in that uncertain light, he fancied to be as beautiful as that of the fable houri. The beauty disappeared in the thicker foliage of the evergreens, and Malcolm Montrose turned to greet his aunt, who now entered.

Lady Leaton was a woman of commonplace, agreeable personalty, middle-aged, large, fat and fair in body, con-

scientious, discreet, and affectionate in mind. She entered the room now, with her portly form dressed in widow's weeds, and her fair, round face encircled by a widow's cap. Her eyes were suffused with tears, and her voice was broken with grief, as she advanced, held out her hand, and welcomed Malcolm Montrose to Allworth Abbey.

A short and agitated conversation sufficed to put Malcolm in possession of the facts with which the reader is already acquainted; and of the result of this interview it is only necessary to say that Malcolm Montrose entirely coincided in opinion with Lady Leaton and with the verdict of the coroner's jury, in supposing that the late Lord Leaton had died of some obscure disease, and not, as the doctor had believed, of poison. It was a great relief to Lady Leaton to find that one so clear-headed and true-hearted as Malcolm Montrose took the same views of the case with herself.

At the close of the interview she rang for a servant to show him to his room, where he might change his dress for dinner.

The chamber to which he was shown was situated immediately over the library, and its front bay window overlooked the same scene. Involuntarily Malcolm sauntered to the window and looked forth upon the night. The moon was now so high in the heavens that its face was reflected even in the shrouded mirror of the dark lake. As he looked forth he saw the same beautiful female figure emerge from the thicket and disappear in the direction of the house. She had evidently entered the building.

Malcolm turned away as though there was no longer any attraction in the moonlight on the shrouded lake, and turned to give his attention to old John, the valet of the late Lord Leaton, who stood ready to assist the young man in making his toilet.

When Malcolm Montrose had refreshed himself with a wash and a change of dress, and stood ready to descend

to the drawing-room, he presented in himself one of the noblest specimens of manly beauty.

He was at this time about twenty-five years of age, tall and finely proportioned, broad-shouldered, deep-chested and strong-limbed. His head was stately, well poised, and covered with rich, dark, auburn hair that waved around a high, broad, white, forehead. His features were of the noblest Roman cast; his complexion was fair and ruddy, and his eyes of a clear, deep blue. His presence was imposing as that of one born to command; his manners were at once gracious and dignified, and his conversational powers brilliant and profound. He was one of those masterpieces of creation, one of those magnetic men who attract and control without any effort.

When Malcolm Montrose entered the crimson drawing-room he found it already brilliantly lighted up for the evening, and amid its glitter of light and glow of color three fair women were revealed. The first, who was his aunt, Lady Leaton, arose and led him up to the other two, who immediately rivetted his attention.

Reclining languidly in an easy chair sat a fair girl, with a delicate complexion, dark-grey eyes, and light brown hair confined in a net of black silk.

Standing on her right hand, and bending affectionately over her, was a large, tall, finely-formed, fair-haired woman, whose ample dress of black velvet fell around her majestic figure like the robes of a queen or the drapery of a goddess.

"Madame, premit me to present to you my nephew, Mr. Montrose, of Dun-Ellen; the Princess Pezzilini, Mr. Montrose," said Lady Leaton, respectfully presenting Malcolm to the stranger.

Malcolm bowed deeply and reverently, and expressed himself honored in making the acquaintance of the widow of the heroic Prince Pezzilini.

The lady, on her part, raised her stately head, smiled

sweetly, curtsied silently, and immediately resumed her attention to the young girl in the chair. But in that single glimpse of her full face, Malcolm saw that she was of that rarest and strangest type of Italian beauty, a perfect blonde—fair, as though she had been born under the cool, damp fogs of England, instead of the burning sun of Italy; and, indeed, if the land of her birth had given her any of its fire, it was only to be seen in the warm and glowing smile that occasionally lighted up her face and beamed from her clear blue eyes.

Malcolm took in all these impressions during the few moments that were occupied in his presentation, and then he turned to greet the young lady in the easy chair—his cousin Agatha.

He saluted her gravely and affectionately, as befitted the serious occasion of their meeting, and then, observing for the first time the extreme delicacy of her face and form, and the languor of her attitude and manner, Malcolm looked uneasy, and expressed a fear that she had been indisposed.

"No, she is not indisposed; that is, not seriously so; but she has not seemed quite well or strong since—since our great bereavement," answered Lady Leaton, concluding the sentence in a faltering voice.

"Not well; no, indeed!" thought Malcolm, as he gazed with concern upon the fair, wan, spiritual face and fragile form of her whom he had left but a few months before the very picture of perfect health. "Not well, yet not seriously indisposed!" Was it possible that this great change could have come over Agatha so gradually that its effects should have escaped the eyes of even her own affectionate mother? Such must have been the case, was the thought of Malcolm, as he held the thin and wasted hand of the young girl in his own, and resolved that upon the next day he would certainly call the attention of Lady Leaton to the fearful change that, though it might have escaped the notice of

those in daily communion with the invalid, while their attention had been absorbed by matters of such transcendent importance as the illness and death of Lord Leaton, yet was, withal, so marked and so alarming as to have shocked him who had left her six months before in full and blooming health.

While these thoughts engaged the mind of Malcolm, a soft footstep approached, and Lady Leaton spoke, saying—

"My niece, Eudora, Mr. Malcolm."

Malcolm raised his eyes carelessly.

Yes, there she stood! the beautiful girl whose graceful form he had followed with a delighted gaze as she glided among the trees upon the banks of the dark lake. There she stood, in the perfect loveliness of her Oriental charms, one of Mohammed's fabled houris descended upon the earth. There she stood—her elegant little figure drawn up to its full height, her graceful head slightly bent upon her bosom, her jet-black ringlets falling around her rich, warm, olive face, with its slender, arched eyebrows, its large, dark, burning eyes, and its crimson cheeks and lips.

Only to look upon such beauty was a keen though dangerous delight. So Malcolm Montrose felt, as he took her hand, raised his eyes to hers, and met the quick and quickly-withdrawn flashing glance of those great, black, burning stars, so full of half-suppressed fire, so replete with thrilling, mysterious meaning.

"I am very happy to meet you, my dear cousin," he said, earnestly, as he pressed and released her hand.

With the long lashes dropped lower over her dark eyes, and her rich bloom heightened, she curtsied slightly, and accepted the chair that he set for her.

Malcolm placed himself beside Agatha, and glided gradually into conversation with herself and the princess; but his eyes involuntarily wandered off to the beautiful Asiatic girl, and every furtive glance thrilled him with a deeper and a stranger delight.

Dinner was announced, and Malcolm gave his arm to the Princess Pezzilini to conduct her to the dining-room. At dinner he sat next to the princess, who was herself a woman of brilliant conversational powers; but while conversing with her his thoughts continually wandered to the lovely, dark-eyed girl on the opposite side of the table.

When dinner was over, and they returned to the drawing-room, the evening was spent in earnest conversation, until at length, when it was quite late, Lady Leaton observed that Agatha seemed fatigued, and rang for her maid to attend her to her chamber. Malcolm led Agatha to the door, where he bade her good-night, and soon after the circle broke up for the evening.

On taking leave of Eudora, Malcolm again touched her hand, and met her eyes with a thrill of delight as strange as it was incomprehensible.

When Malcolm reached his chamber, he at once dismissed the old valet, locked his door, and commenced pacing thoughtfully up and down the room. He had enough of exciting subjects occupying his mind to keep him from rest. The presence of the magnificent Pezzilini in the house; the death of his uncle; the failing health of his fair young cousin; but through all these disturbing subjects glided one image of ineffable loveliness—Eudora, the beautiful Asiatic girl; and this haunting image was so delightful to contemplate, that as often as it glided before his imagination, he paused to dwell enchanted upon it. He would not listen to the still small voice that warned him this was a dangerous vision; he meant no wrong to Agatha, his betrothed bride, to whom his hand was pledged, to whom he thought his heart was given, and he knew nothing of the insidious approaches of that master-passion which steals first through the eyes, then through the imagination, until it effects an immovable lodgment in the heart. The field of his imagination was already occupied; would the citadel of his heart be occupied? Who could tell?

It was after midnight when he retired to rest, resolving to be faithful to his affianced bride, and sank to sleep, dreaming of the beautiful Eastern houri.

Eudora occupied a small, plainly-furnished room adjoining her cousin Agatha's spacious and sumptuous chamber, and, since Agatha had been ailing, it was a part of Eudora's duty, whenever the invalid was restless at night, to sit by her bedside and read her to sleep. But on reaching her little room this evening, Eudora found the door communicating with her cousin's chamber closed and locked on the other side.

"She wishes to be alone to-night," said the gentle girl to herself, as she drew a low chair and sat down before the little coal fire to fall into one of those reveries to which her poetical temperament inclined her. She thought of the magnificent new relative to whom she had been presented that evening, for magnificent, indeed, to her he seemed in his noble, manly beauty and grace. She dwelt upon his image with a strange feeling of satisfaction and content, as upon some good long wanting in her life, and now found and appropriated. She felt again the earnest pressure of his hand in clasping hers; she saw again his eagle eyes melt into tenderness as they met her own; she heard again the earnest tones of his voice in greeting her. No one had ever before clasped her hand, or looked in her eyes, or spoken to her heart as he did. Every one was kind to the orphan; indeed it would have been impossible for any one to have been otherwise to so gentle a creature, but it was with a superficial kindness that did not seem to recognize her deeper need of sympathy. No one had seemed to remember that the stranger girl had under her black bodice a sensitive heart, to be wounded by neglect or delighted by affection—no one but him; and he, too, so handsome, so accomplished, and so distinguished, that he might have been excused for slighting her. At least, so thought Eudora.

"But the gods are ever compassionate, and he is like a god," said the hero-worshipping young heart to itself. It was so sweet to recall and live over again that meeting in which he had been so earnestly kind.

"He will understand and love me, I feel that he will!" she murmured to herself, with a delighted smile. But the words had no sooner been breathed from her lips than she understood their full import. It stood revealed to her conscience as by a flash of spiritual light, that her imagination was occupied by a forbidden and perilous vision. And yet it was so sweet to entertain this alluring vision, and so bitter to banish it away.

She dropped her head upon her breast, and her clasped hands upon her lap, and sat, as it were, with her dark eyes gazing into vacancy after her receding dream.

Some time she sat thus, and then murmured—

"I am lonely and desolate indeed. None love me truly and deeply, as I need to be loved, as I long to love. They give me food and clothing and kind words, and with these I ought to be content, but I am not! I am not! My heart is starving for a deeper sympathy and a closer friendship, and I long for that as the famishing beggar longs for bread, but I must not hope to satisfy this hunger of the heart upon forbidden fruit, and a sure instinct warns me that even the kindred affection of my cousin is forbidden fruit to me. I will think no more of him." And with this wise resolution Eudora offered up her evening prayers and retired to rest. But in the world of sleep the forbidden vision followed her, and her cousin Malcolm was ever by her side with looks of sympathy and words of love.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE BRIDE OF HEAVEN.

I will not think of him—I'll pace
This old ancestral hall,
And dream of that illustrious race
Whose pictures line the wall.
And from their dark and haughty eyes,
Though faded now and dim,
A better spirit shall arise,
I will not think of him.—*Mrs. Warfield.*

FLIGHT! In that one short syllable lies the only safety from a forbidden passion, and where flight is impossible, passion becomes destiny.

Malcolm Montrose had come to Allworth Abbey with the full understanding that he was to remain with the bereaved ones for three months, and at the end of that time quietly consummate his betrothal to the heiress by a marriage that, in consideration of the recent decease of the head of the family, was to be celebrated without pomp. Such had been the dying instructions of Lord Leaton to his wife, and such she had conveyed in her letter to Malcolm. To fly from his forbidden love would be to fly also from his betrothed bride. He remained, therefore, happy in the absolute obligation that compelled him to remain. Eudora had no other refuge in the world whither to fly. Flight, therefore, to her also was impossible.

And perhaps by both it was unthought of. Circumstances bound them together, and so passion became destiny. Both struggled perseveringly with the growing madness. They instinctively avoided each other as much as it was possible to do so. But in every casual touch of their hands, every meeting glance of their eyes, and every intonation of their voices, was transmitted the subtle fuel of

that secret fire that was smoldering in each bosom. They never remained for a moment alone together; they never voluntarily addressed one word to each other; and yet, when they did meet, or were forced to speak, the blushing cheek of the girl, the faltering tone of the man, the averted looks of both, betrayed to themselves, if not to others, the hidden love that was burning in their breasts.

Every motive of honor, gratitude and humanity constrained them to conquer their passion, and not the least of these was their mutual sorrow in the declining health of Agatha.

Agatha was dying—though no one yet dared to say it, every one knew it. The fair girl herself felt it, and instead of preparing for her bridal, that was arranged to be celebrated on the first of May, she withdrew her thoughts more and more from the things of this world, and fixed them upon Heaven. Always of a thoughtful and serious turn of mind, she became now almost saintly in her self-renunciation, her patience, and her resignation.

Often as she sat reclining in her easy chair, watching the mutual embarrassment of Malcolm and Eudora, and seeing, with the clear vision of the dying, the hidden struggles of their hearts, a sweet smile would break over her fair, wan, spiritual face, and she would murmur to herself—

"They are striving bravely to do right—they will not have to strive long; a few more short weeks, and their reward will be certain; their love will be innocent, and their happiness complete. And shall I, who am going hence, envy them their love and joy? Oh, no! oh no! for well I know that whither I go there is a fulness of joy and love that mortal imaginations have never conceived."

The fair girl faded fast away. Day by day her thin form wasted thinner, her pale cheeks grew paler, and her hollow eyes hollower, while the saintly spirit within burned with a more seraphic brightness. The symptoms of her malady were the same as those that had carried off her father The

utmost skill and science of the medical faculty were taxed in vain; they could neither define the nature of her wasting illness, nor find a cure for it. The fair girl failed rapidly. Her easy-chair in the drawing-room was soon resigned for the sofa in her own dressing-room, from which she never stirred during the day. And about the first of May, when she was to have been united to Malcolm Montrose, the sofa was finally resigned for her bed, from which she never more arose.

Malcolm and Eudora reproached themselves bitterly for their unconquerable love, because it seemed to wrong Agatha. They vied with each other in the most affectionate attention to the invalid; and often as they stood each side her couch, ministering to her wants, she longed to make them happy by releasing Malcolm from his engagement to herself, and placing the hand of Eudora in his own; but instinctive delicacy withheld her from intermeddling with the love affairs of others.

Lady Leaton, heart-broken by the loss of her husband, and the approaching death of her daughter, observed the growing and ill-concealed attachment between Malcolm and Eudora with all a mother's bitter jealousy. And struggled against as that attachment evidently was, she nevertheless resented it as a grievous wrong to her dying child.

Agatha, with the clairvoyance of a departing spirit, saw into the hearts of all around her, and judged them in justice and mercy. One day while her afflicted mother watched alone beside her bed, she said to her—

"Mamma, dear, I wish to speak with you about Malcolm and Eudora. I know that you are displeased with them, mamma; but it is without just cause. They love each other; they struggle against that love, but they cannot conquer it. It is because they were created for each other. Their marriage is already made in heaven. My marriage with Malcolm, mamma, was designed only on earth as a matter of policy and convenience. Malcolm and I loved each

other only as brother and sister; we never could have loved in any other way even if I had lived to become his wife. But he and Eudora love one other as two who are destined for time and eternity to blend into one. Forgive them, mamma; forgive and be kind to them for my sake."

"But you, Agatha!—my child!—I can think only of you!" sobbed the lady.

"Dear mamma, I know that all your ambition has been for your Agatha's good, and happiness, and advancement. But consider, if your wildest dreams for your child had been fulfilled, and even more than that, if you could have made her a king's bride, placed upon her brow a queen's crown, gathered around her all the wealth, splendor, and glory of this world—could you have rendered her as happy, as blessed, and as exalted as she is now by the free mercy of God—now, when she is departing for that land the joys of which 'eye hath not seen, ear heard, or imagination conceived,' and where she shall wait for you in perfect bliss and perfect safety till you come? Mamma, your daughter is the bride of Heaven, and that is better than being the wife of the noblest man or the greatest monarch on this earth."

The countenance of the young saint was glorious in its holy enthusiasm, and the human jealousy of her mother was dispelled before its heavenly light.

"You are better than I am; my child, my child, you are better than I am; you are a saint prepared for heaven!" exclaimed Lady Leaton, fervently.

"Mamma, grant Agatha one petition. She wants to see them happy before she goes. They are so conscientious and so wretched, mamma; they are afraid to speak to each other, or to look at each other, lest they should wound or wrong me. It makes me miserable to see them so because I love them both, mamma, and I know that they love me, and for my sake they struggle bravely with their passion for each other. Let me speak to Malcolm, mamma; let me

tell him that I loved him only as a dear brother; let me release him from his engagement to me, and let me place Eudora's hand in his with a sister's frank and warm affection. Then, mamma, when the embargo is taken off their love; when they are free to look at each other and speak to each other as betrothed lovers may, then I shall be happy in their happiness—happier still to know that I have promoted it—happiest of all to feel how they both will love me for it. Dear mamma, let Agatha do this little good and have this little delight before she departs."

"My angel child, you shall do in all things as you please. You speak and act from Heaven's own inspiration, and it were sacrilege to hinder you," exclaimed Lady Leaton, in deep emotion.

"Thank you, dear mamma, I shall be happy," said Agatha, with a heavenly smile.

"And the deadly upas tree shall be all in all," said a low voice at the side of Lady Leaton.

She started, and turned to see the Princess Pezzilini standing there.

"Madame!" she said, in some uneasiness.

"Nay, I did but quote a line from a fable that I read you some three months ago," said the princess, quietly seating herself beside the bed.

Agatha had been too deeply absorbed in her own benevolent plans to notice what was passing.

That evening, when all was quiet in the house, and the stillness of a deeper repose pervaded her own luxurious chamber—Agatha dismissed all her attendants, and sent for Lady Leaton, Malcolm, and Eudora to attend her. They came immediately. The chamber was illumed with a soft, moonlight sort of radiance from the shaded beams of an alabaster lamp that stood upon the mantel-shelf opposite the foot of the bed.

The bed curtains were drawn away, revealing the fair face and fragile form of the dying girl as she reclined upon her

bed propped up with pillows. She smiled on her relatives as they entered, and beckoned them to draw very near.

They came, and stood at the side of her bed—accidentally arranged as follows: Eudora nearest the head of the bed, Lady Leaton next, and Malcolm last.

She put out her wasted hand, took the hand of Eudora, and held it quietly within her own, while she seemed to collect her thoughts for utterance. Then, still holding Eudora's hand she raised her dove-like eyes to Malcolm's face, and whispered—

"Dearest Malcolm! dearest brother of my heart! you will let the dying speak out freely, I know."

"Speak, sweet Agatha, speak your will," murmured the young man, in a voice vibrating with emotion.

"I was your betrothed bride, Malcolm; but our betrothal was a human error, dearest; and the will of Heaven has interposed to break it. I am called hence, Malcolm, to another sphere. Not your bride, but the bride of Heaven shall I be. But before I go hence, Malcolm, I would prove to you how true is the sister's love I bear you, and the kindred affection I feel for Eudora. I would prove these by two legacies by which I would have you remember me."

She paused and drew from her wasted finger the keeper-ring, which its attenuated form could scarcely longer hold, and placing it firmly upon the round, plump finger of Eudora, she said—

"This, dear one, is my legacy to you!"

Then taking the same hand with the keeper-ring upon its finger, she placed it in the hand of Malcolm, saying—

"And this, dearest brother of my soul, this is my dying legacy to you!"

She sank back exhausted upon her pillow, while low, half-suppressed sobs broke from those around her. And Malcolm and Eudora each thought how willingly they would give up their mutual love, nay, life itself, to have restored this dying angel to health and joy. And Lady Leaton

prayed Heaven that her own life might not outlast that of her beloved child. At length Agatha spoke again.

"When I am gone, my mother will be very desolate—a widow, and childless. Promise me this—dear Eudora, and dearest Malcolm—that you will be a son and daughter to my mother."

In earnest tones, and amid suffocating sobs, they promised all she required.

A little while longer she held the hands of Malcolm and Eudora united and clasped within her own, and then releasing them, she said—

"Good night, dearest Malcolm. Go to rest, beloved mother; Eudora will watch with me to night."

Lady Leaton stooped, and gathered Agatha for a moment to her bosom, and with a whispered prayer, laid her back upon her pillows. Malcolm bent down, and pressed a kiss upon her brow; and then both withdrew, leaving Eudora upon the watch. And still holding Eudora's hand, Agatha sank into a peaceful sleep.

Hours passed. The room was so quiet, the sleep of the patient was so calm, and the position of the watcher so easy within her lounging-chair that Eudora, overcome with fatigue of many nights' vigil, could scarcely keep her eyes open.

Once, indeed, she must have lost herself in a momentary slumber, for she dreamed that a women in dark raiment, with her head wrapped in a dark veil, glided across the chamber, and disappeared within her own little room; but when she aroused herself, and looked around, and walked into the adjoining room to examine it, there was no one to be seen.

"I have been dreaming—I have slept upon my watch," said Eudora, regretfully; and to prevent a recurrence of drowsiness, she bathed her forehead and temples with aromatic vinegar, and saturated her handkerchief with the same pungent liquid, and resumed her seat beside the patient.

At this moment Agatha awoke, complained of thirst, and asked for drink.

Eudora went to a side-table, poured out a glass of tamarind-water, and brought it to the invalid.

Agatha drank eagerly, and sank back upon her pillows with a sigh of satisfaction.

Eudora silently resumed her seat and her watch; but scarcely five minutes had passed, when suddenly Agatha started up, her eyes strained outward, her features livid, and her limbs convulsed.

Eudora sprang to her in alarm.

Agatha essayed to speak, but the spasms in her throat prevented utterance.

In the extremity of terror, Eudora laid her down upon the pillows, and sprang to the bell-pull, and rang loudly for assistance.

Then hurrying back to the bed-side, she found Agatha livid, rigid, with locked jaws, laboring lungs, and startling eyes.

She caught her up in her arms, rubbed her temples, and rubbed her hands, exclaiming all the while:

"Oh, my dear, dear Agatha! my dear, dear Agatha! what, what is this? Speak to me! Oh, speak to me!"

The strained eyes of the dying girl suddenly softened, and turned upon the speaker a beseeching, helpless look, and then the rigid form suddenly relaxed, and became a dead weight in the arms of Eudora.

Lady Leaton, followed by several of the female servants, now came hurrying in.

"What is the matter? Is she worse?" exclaimed the mother, hurrying to the bedside.

"Lady Leaton, she is dead!" cried Eudora, in a voice of anguish.

Let us draw a vail over the grief of that mother. In all this world of troubles, there is no sorrow like that of a widowed mother grieving for the death of her only child.

At first Lady Leaton would not believe in the extent of her affliction. She wildly insisted that her child could not, should not be dead—dead without a parting word, or look, or prayer! She sent off messengers in haste to bring their medical attendant. And not until Dr. Watkins had come and examined the patient, and pronounced life fled, could Lady Leaton be made to believe the truth, or induced to leave the chamber of death. Then she fainted in the arms of Princess Pezzilini, and was borne to her own apartment in a state of insensibility.

It was some hours after this that Dr. Watkins somewhat peremptorily demanded a private interview with Malcolm Montrose.

The young man, in deep affliction for the death of her whom he loved as a dear sister, gave audience to the doctor in the library.

The family physician entered with a grave and stern brow, and seating himself at the library-table, opposite Mr. Montrose, began—

"Sir, what I have to say to you is painful in the extreme both for me to utter and for you to hear; but the sternest duty obliges me to speak."

Mr. Montrose withdrew his hand from his corrugated brow, raised his troubled eyes to the speaker, and awaited his further words.

"I know that what I am about to communicate must greatly augment the sorrow under which you suffer, and yet it must be communicated."

"Speak out, I beseech you, sir," said Mr. Montrose, with a vague but awful presentiment of what was coming.

"Three months ago I attended the death-bed of the late Lord Leaton. I gave it as my opinion then, I hold it as my opinion now, that his death was accelerated by poison. The coroner's jury came to a different conclusion, and their verdict, taken together with the fact that the *post-mortem* examination detected no trace of poison, I confess shook

my faith in my own conviction. To-night I have been called to the bedside of his only daughter; I have looked upon her dead body, and heard an account of the manner in which she had died. And now, Mr. Malcolm Montrose, I positively assert that Agatha Leaton came to her death by poison, administered in the tamarind-water of which she drank some five or ten minutes before her death—and I stake my medical reputation upon this issue."

"My God! it cannot be true!" exclaimed Malcolm Montrose, starting up, and gazing upon the speaker in the extremity of horror and grief.

"Mr. Montrose," said the doctor, impressively, taking the hand of the young man, and forcing him back to his seat, "the widowed and childless head of this house is now in no condition to meet this crisis. You are her natural representative. You must summon all your firmness and take the direction of affairs. I shall remain here to assist you. I have already taken some steps in the matter; I have secured the jug and glass of tamarind-water to be analyzed. I have also telegraphed for the family solicitor to come down, and I have sent for the coroner, and for a police force to occupy the house, for no one must be permitted to escape until the coroner's inquest has set upon the deceased and given in their verdict."

"But, good Heaven, doctor!" exclaimed the young man in horror and amazement; "who, *who* could aim at so harmless and innocent a life?"

"Who," repeated the doctor; "who had the greatest interest in her death, and in the death of her father before her?"

"None! no one on earth! Who could have possibly had such an interest?" cried the young man, shuddering.

"Who is the next heiress to this vast estate after Lord Leaton and his daughter?" said the doctor, looking fixedly in the eyes of his companion.

Malcolm Montrose started up, threw his hands to his head,

and then reeling back, dropped into his chair again, and remained gazing in horror upon the speaker.

"Who," pursued the doctor, with a merciless inflexibility, "who had constant access to the bedside of the late Lord Leaton?—who prepared his food and drink?—who has been the constant attendant of his invalid daughter?—who watched by her side last night?—whose hand was it that placed at her lips the fatal draught that laid her dead?"

"My God! my God, doctor! what horrible monster of suspicion has taken possession of your mind? Give it a name!" exclaimed the young man, as great drops of sweat beaded upon his agonized brow.

"*Eudora Leaton!* Her hand it was that prepared the death-draught for her uncle! her hand it was that gave the poisoned draught to his daughter! It is a terrible charge to make, I know; but we must not deal hesitatingly with the secret poisoner," said the doctor, solemnly.

"Great Heaven! it cannot be—it cannot be!" groaned the young man, in mortal anguish.

The doctor arose to his feet, saying—

"I leave you, Mr. Montrose, to recover this shock, while I go to put seals upon the effects of this girl, and to prepare for the investigation that shall bring the poisoner to justice."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ACCUSATION.

"If she prove guilty—
Farewell my faith in aught of human kind.
I'll hie me to some hermit's cave, and there
Forget my race."

When the doctor had left the library, Malcolm Montrose threw himself back in his chair, clasped his forehead between his hands, and strove to master the consternation that seemed to threaten his very reason.

Grief, horror, and amazement, sufficient to have shaken the firmness of the strongest mind, deprived him for the moment of all power of practical and definite action. And yet, through all the terrible emotion that shook his soul to its centre, he was conscious of a profound incredulity in the truth of the doctor's statement. But the doubt, the uncertainty, the mere suspicion of such atrocious crimes, perpetrated in the bosom of his own family, overwhelmed him with consternation.

"Dead by the hand of the secret poisoner! the baron and his daughter too! the baron whose whole life had been one long act of the noblest beneficence, and his child, whose days had been ever devoted to the happiness of all around her! their benign lives cut off by poison! Impossible! impossible! it cannot be! it is not so!

"And yet, and yet the suddenness and the strangeness of both deaths, and the unquestionable competency of the physician who attended them in their last hours, and who now makes this dreadful assertion!

"And if this is so, by whom, great Heavens? By whom has this atrocious crime been perpetrated? and for what purpose? Who could have any interest in the premature death of this noble man and lovely girl?

"No one but—oh, Heaven! but Eudora! She is their heiress; the estate is now hers, but she is innocent! my life, my honor, my soul will I stake upon her innocence. And yet, if this father and child shall be proved to have died by poison, how black the evidence may be made to appear against her, and how weak her own position! She is an orphan and friendless, and though on her father's side of English parentage, she is of foreign birth and education, and has been in this country too short a time to establish a character. She has no good antecedents to set against this dreadful charge with the strong testimony that may be brought to support it. She was the third in succession to this estate, and, consequently, her mercenary interest in the deaths of the baron and his daughter. She was the constant attendant of the late Lord Leaton, and prepared the drink of which he died. She watched last night by the side of Agatha, and administered to her the so-called fatal draught. If they are proved to have died by poison it will ruin her indeed. She will be called a second Brinvilliers. She will be arraigned, tried, condemned—oh, Heaven of Heavens! what unspeakable horrors remain in store for her, innocent as an angel though I know her to be."

Such were the maddening thoughts that coursed through his brain and caused the sweat of agony to start from his brow. He wiped the beaded drops from his pale forehead, and sprang up and paced the room with disordered steps, laboring in vain for the composure that he could not obtain.

The death of the noble-hearted baron in the prime of life, the death of the sweet young girl in dawn of youth, were mournful enough even though they died from natural causes, and if they perished by poison administered by treacherous hands their fate was dreadful indeed. And yet it was nothing to be compared with the unutterable horror of that train of misfortunes which threatened the orphan stranger, the innocent Eudora. And thus other emotions of sorrow for the loss of his near relatives were swallowed

up in an anguish of anxiety for the fate of the orphan girl.

And so he strove for self-command, and coolness, and clearness of mind, that he might be prepared to assist at the approaching investigation, in the hope of discovering the truth, and clearing the fame of Eudora.

He paced up and down the library floor until he had obtained the necessary state of calmness to deal with this mystery.

When the doctor had left the library he was met in the hall by a servant, hastening towards him in great agitation, and saying:

"Sir, I was just coming to see you. The Princess Pezzilini begs that you will hasten at once to my lady's bedside, as her ladyship is in the death-throe!"

Without a word of reply the doctor turned and hurried up the stairs and along the corridor leading to Lady Leaton's apartments.

When he entered the chamber he found Lady Leaton in violent convulsions, and restrained from throwing herself out of the bed only by the strong arms of the Italian princess, which thrown around her shoulders supported her heaving form.

But, even as the doctor stepped up to the bedside, her form relaxed and became supple as that of an infant.

The princess laid the head back upon the pillow. Her eyes closed, and the ashen hue of death overspread her features.

The doctor took up her left hand, and placed his fingers upon the pulse. But that pulse was still, and that hand was the hand of the dead. He laid it gently down, and turning, looked upon those gathered around the bed.

They were the Princess Pezzilini, Eudora Leaton, and her ladyship's maid.

Especially he fastened his eyes upon Eudora, who knelt

on the opposite side of the bed, with her face buried in the bed-clothes, in an attitude of deep grief.

"Can any one here inform me whether Lady Leaton drank of the tamarind-water which stood upon the mantleshelf of Miss Leaton's chamber?" inquired the doctor, looking sternly around him.

"Yes, sir," answered the lady's maid, looking up through her tears; "when my lady was so agitated by seeing the condition of Miss Leaton as to be near swooning, and I was obliged to support her in my arms, I called for a glass of water, and Miss Eudora quickly poured out a tumbler of tamarind-water, saying there was no other at hand, and held it to her ladyship's lips."

"And her ladyship drank it?"

"Yes, sir; she eagerly drank off the whole glassful, for she was so anxious to keep up for Miss Leaton's sake, not believing that she was past all help," replied the woman.

"That will do," said the doctor, once bending his eyes sternly upon the kneeling form of Eudora.

But the girl, unconscious of the storm that was gathering over her head, remained absorbed in grief.

"Madame," said the doctor, turning to the princess, "your friend has joined her daughter. There is now no lady at the head of this afflicted house. I must, therefore, entreat you for charity to assume some necessary authority here over these dismayed female domestics; at least, until some measures can be taken for the regulation of the establishment."

The Italian princess lifted her fine face, in which grief seemed to struggle with the habitual composure of pride, and gracefully indicating Eudora by a small wave of her arm, she said:

"You forget, sir, that we stand in the presence of the young lady of the house, who, however bowed with grief she may now be, will soon, no doubt, be found equal to her high position."

"Madame, if your highness alludes to Miss Eudora Leaton, I must beg to say that she cannot be permitted to intermeddle with any of the affairs of the household for the present," replied the doctor.

The mention of her name in so stern a manner aroused Eudora from her trance of sorrow, and she arose from her knees, and looked around, to see every eye bent on her in doubt, perplexity, and suspicion. While she looked beseechingly from one face to another, as if praying for some explanation of their strange regards, there came a low rap at the door.

The doctor went and softly opened it. And the voice of a servant was heard saying:

"The coroner has arrived, and begs to see you at once, if you please, sir."

"In good time," replied the doctor. "Have the police arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send two of them up to me at once, and say to Coroner Adams, that I will be with him immediately."

The servant withdrew, and the doctor, returning to the side of the Italian princess, said:

"Madame, will your highness be pleased to retire to your own apartments, as this chamber, with all its other occupants, must be placed in charge of the police."

The princess, with a look of surprise, bent her stately head, and passed forth from the room.

She had scarcely withdrawn when the two policemen presented themselves.

"You will keep the door of this apartment, and let no one enter or pass out," said the doctor, posting the two officers one at each entrance of the death-chamber.

He gave a glance at Eudora, who stood still by the bedside, the image of grief, wonder, and perplexity, and then he passed on, and went down to rejoin Mr. Montrose, and to meet the coroner.

He met Malcolm, who was just leaving the library to meet him.

"What is the matter now? What new misfortune has occurred?" inquired the young man, noticing the doctor's severe and threatening countenance.

"Lady Leaton has just expired, a victim to the same diabolical agency that destroyed her husband and child," said the doctor, sternly.

Montrose started back panic-stricken, and muttering,

"Horror on horror! Are we sleeping or walking—mad or sane? Lady Leaton dead?"

"We are awake and in our right senses, Mr. Montrose, and Lady Leaton is dead—dead by the hands of that same young Asiatic fiend who murdered her husband and her daughter!"

"Dr. Watkins, beware how you charge an innocent girl with so heinous a crime."

"Mr. Montrose, I see that you are a partizan of Miss Leaton's, but I have made no charge which I am not able to prove before the coroner's inquest, and which their verdict will not soon confirm."

"Does this most innocent and unhappy girl know of what she is accused?"

"She knows her crimes, and doubtless she has reason to suspect that we know them also."

"Do not say '*we know them*,' doctor. *I* do not know of any crime of hers; on the contrary, *I* know in my own secret consciousness that she is most innocent of all crime, and even of all wrong; and *you* do not know it; you only suspect it, and in that suspicion you wrong one of the most excellent young creatures that ever lived."

"Mr. Montrose, you are blinded by partiality; but the veil will soon be torn from your eyes."

"It is *you* who are blinded by some prejudice when you accuse a young and lovely girl of a tissue of crimes that would make the blood of a Borgia run cold with horror!" said the young man, with a shudder.

"We shall see; a few hours will decide between us;" replied the doctor, grimly.

"Where is the unhappy girl now?" inquired Malcolm Montrose.

"Where she must remain for the present: in the death-chamber of Lady Leaton, which is now in the charge of the police. And now, Mr. Montrose; the coroner awaits us in the crimson drawing-room," said the physician, leading the way thither.

It was broad daylight, the sun was high in the heavens, though the dismayed servants seemed only now to remember to extinguish the lights and open the windows.

Breakfast was prepared in the breakfast-parlor, but no family circle gathered around it.

The doctor, the Princess Pezzilini, and finally Malcolm Montrose, strayed separately and at intervals into the room, quaffed each a cup of coffee, and withdrew.

Meantime, the coroner formed his inquest. The investigation required some time and much caution, therefore the whole house was placed in charge of the police while the examination was in progress.

Physicians and chemists were summoned to assist in the autopsy of the dead bodies and the analysis of the water of which they had both drank immediately before death.

The autopsy and the analysis both proved successful. Traces of a virulent poison were found in the bodies of the deceased, and the presence of the same fatal agent was detected in the beverage of which they had partaken. It was so far clearly proved that both Lady Leaton and her daughter had died by poison!

But by whom had it been prepared and administered? That was the next point of inquiry.

Alas! the question seemed but too easily answered. Nevertheless, the coroner went coolly, formally, and systematically to work.

The witnesses, that had been kept jealously apart during

the progress of the inquest, were called and examined separately, and their testimony carefully taken down and compared together. The coroner's jury then deliberated long and carefully upon the evidence before them.

The inquest lasted through the whole of two long summer days, and the sun was setting on the second when they made up their verdict.

"The deceased, Matilda, Baroness Leaton, of Allworth, and her daughter, the Honorable Agatha Leaton, came to their deaths by the poison of *Ignatia*, administered in tamarind-water by the hands of Eudora Leaton."

A warrant was made out for the arrest of Eudora Leaton, and put in the hands of an officer for immediate execution.

"There! what do you think of that? Has my charge been proved? Is my statement confirmed by the coroner's inquest? What is your opinion now?" inquired the doctor of Malcolm Montrose, who had been a pale and agonized spectator of the scene.

"My opinion is what it ever has been and ever will be—that Eudora Leaton is innocent; innocent as one of God's holy angels; and upon that issue I stake my every earthly and every heavenly good, my every temporal and every eternal hope, my life, honor, and soul!"

"Then you'll lose them, my young friend, that is all. Ah, Montrose, it is hard to believe in atrocious crimes, even when we see them recorded in newspaper paragraphs as committed by strangers and at some distance; but we are appalled and utterly incredulous when they come closely home to ourselves. This self-deception is natural, for doubtless other great criminals have seemed to their own partial friends as unlikely to commit the crimes of which they have been convicted, as this beautiful young demon has seemed to us. People of notoriously bad character seldom or never commit great crimes. They seem to fritter away their natural wickedness in a succession of small felonies. It is your quiet, respectable, commonplace

people that poison and assassinate just as though they hoarded all their sinfulness for one grand exploit."

"Sir, you treat the deepest tragedies of human life, the tragedies of crime and death, with a levity unbecoming your age, your profession, and the circumstances in which we are placed," said the young man, in bitter sorrow.

"I treat the subject with levity! I never was in more solemn earnest in my life! If you doubt my words, recall your own experience. Recollect all the greatest criminals within your own knowledge, and say whether they were not every one of them, according to their social positions, very decent, very respectable, or very genteel persons—until they were clearly convicted of capital crimes? I could name a score within my own memory, only Heaven pardon them, as they have paid the penalty of their crimes, I do not wish to vex their ghosts by calling up their names and deeds to recollection."

Montrose did not reply. He could scarcely follow the doctor in his discourse. His thoughts were all engaged with the hapless Eudora and the train of unutterable misfortunes that lay before her.

While he stood in bitter sorrow, a constable, holding a warrant in his hand, approached, and touching his hat to the doctor and Mr. Montrose, requested that they would please accompany him to the chamber of Miss Leaton, that he might serve the warrant.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ARREST.

"Why bend their brows so sternly on me, Vaughn?
What have I done? Oh, tell me quickly, youth!
My soul can ill endure their frowning looks."

THROUGH all this long, dreadful investigation, Eudora had remained in the death-chamber of Lady Leaton, bowed down with grief, but unconscious of the heavy clouds that were gathering darkly over her young head.

She had seen the body of her aunt carried away from the chamber towards the crimson drawing-room where the coroner's inquest was held, and where the *post-mortem* examination was made.

She had been called in her turn to give her separate testimony before the jury, and she had described the deaths of Agatha and that of Lady Leaton simply as she had witnessed them. She had not omitted to mention a circumstance that she had regarded as a dream—namely, the passage and disappearance of a dark-robed woman in Agatha's chamber. At the close of her testimony she had been conducted back to the chamber from which she had been taken, and there she had tarried through the remainder of the investigation.

Half stunned with grief, she felt no disposition and made no attempt to leave the room. She saw the policemen guarding the doors, but did not even suspect that she was their prisoner. She had noticed in the morning the strange regards of those around her, but, absorbed in sorrow for the loss of her relatives, the circumstance had passed from her mind.

In the course of the day food and drink had been sent

to her by the thoughtful attention of Malcom Montrose, but she had partaken of nothing but a cup of tea.

And now, at the close of this long and terrible day, she remained as has been said, bowed down with grief, but totally unsuspicious of the dark storm that was gathering around her. She sat in a low chair beside the now empty bed, with her head down upon the coverlet, so dead to all external impressions, that the door was opened and the room half-filled with people before she moved. There was the Princess Pezzilini, Malcolm Montrose, Dr. Watkins, the officer who brought the warrant, the two policemen that kept the doors, and a crowd of male and female servants drawn thither by curiosity.

And still Eudora did not look up.

The Princess Pezzilini glided softly to her side and stood bending over her with looks of compassion; then raising her blue eyes swimming in tears to the faces of the doctor and Mr. Montrose, she said:

"Forgive me; I know that she is most guilty, and that I of all persons should most condemn her, for she has destroyed my benefactress; but she is so young, I cannot help pitying her, for we know that the more guilty the wretched girl may be the more needful of compassion she is."

The voice of the princess sounding so near her ear caused Eudora to look up; and at the same moment the officer who held the warrant advanced, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, said:

"Miss Eudora Leaton, you are my prisoner."

She did not understand. She arose quickly to her feet, and looked inquiringly into the face of the constable, and from his face into those of the persons that crowded the room and gathered around her. As her star-like eyes ranged around the circle, the eyes of those she looked upon sank to the ground, while dark frowns lowered upon every brow.

As she gazed, her perplexity gave place to a vague alarm.

"What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?" she inquired, in faltering accents.

An ominous silence followed her question, while the eyes of the crowd were once more fixed sternly upon her.

"Why do you look upon me so? What is it? Will no one speak?" she demanded, while a vague, overpowering terror took possession of her heart.

"Tell her, officer, and put an end to this," sternly commanded the doctor.

"Miss Eudora Leaton, you are my prisoner," repeated the constable, again laying his hand upon her.

"Your prisoner!" she exclaimed, shrinking in dismay and abhorrence from the degrading touch. "Your prisoner! what do you mean?"

"Tell her, officer, and end this," repeated the doctor while Eudora looked wildly from one to the other, and sank back in her chair.

"Miss Leaton," said the constable, blandly, "the crowner's 'quest has been and found a verdict against *you*, charging you with poisoning of your aunt, Matilda, Lady Leaton, and your cousin, the Honorable Agatha Leaton; and this paper in my hand is the crowner's warrant for your arrest."

Before he had finished, Eudora had sprung to her feet, and now she stood with her dark, starry eyes dilated and blazing with a horror that approached insanity.

At length she found her voice. Clasping her hands and raising her eyes, in a passion of self-vindication, she exclaimed:

"Great Lord of heaven! is there any one on earth capable of such heinous crimes? Is there any one here who believes me to be so?"

The doctor came to her side, saying:

"Young girl, the proof against you is too clear to leave a doubt upon the mind of any one present."

"Proof? how can there be proof of that which never happened—which never could have happened?—a crime which my very soul abhors; at which my whole frame shudders, from which my whole nature recoils—and committed by me and upon those whom I was bound to love and respect and serve! and committed for what purpose, great Heaven! for what purpose? What object could I have had in the destruction of my own nearest kindred, dearest friends, and only protectors?" demanded the accused girl, in a tone of impassioned grief, indignation and horror.

"Your object was obvious to the dullest comprehension; it forms one of the strongest points in the evidence against you," said the implacable doctor.

"My object, then, what was it? You, who charge me with the crime, declare the object!" exclaimed Eudora, rivetting upon his face her blazing eyes, through which her rising and indignant soul flashed repudiation at so vile a charge.

"Your object, girl, was the inheritance of their estates. Lord and Lady Leaton and their daughter being dead, you are the sole heiress of unencumbered Allworth," replied the unflinching physician.

The fire that flashed from her eyes, the color that burned upon her cheeks, died slowly out. The pallor of unutterable horror spread like death over her face. She reeled as though she must have fallen to the floor, but recovered herself by a violent effort. Clasping her hands in the agonizing earnestness of her appeal, she exclaimed:

"Oh! does any one here believe this of me?"

Stern silence was the only reply.

"Madame Pezzilini! you have known me intimately for months—do you believe it?" she said, turning in an anguish of supplication to the Italian princess.

"Bellissima, my heart is broken—do not ask me!" said the princess, averting her face.

Eudora turned her despairing eyes to the crowd of stern, pitiless, accusing faces around her, and seeing the form of Malcolm Montrose in the background, she extended her clasped hands, in passionate prayer, towards him, and the tones of her voice arose, wild, high, and piercing in the agony of her last appeal, as she cried:

"Mr. Montrose! oh, Mr. Montrose! *you* do not believe me to be such a fiend?"

"No, no, no!" said Malcolm, earnestly, fervently, vehemently, as he pushed his way through the crowd, and came to her side and took her hand. "No, Eudora! I do not believe it! I have never for an instant been tempted to believe it! You are innocent of the very thought of evil! and this I will uphold both in private and in public! I will stand by you like a brother; I will aid, protect and defend you to the last, so far as you have need of me, and I power to serve you—and to this I pledge my life, and soul, and honor! And as I keep this pledge to you, may Heaven deal with me at my own greatest extremity! Take comfort, sweet girl! Your innocence is a mighty, invincible stronghold, which all these atrocious charges must assail in vain."

"Oh, thanks! thanks! thanks!" said Eudora, her fiery eyes melting into the first tears that she had shed since her arrest.

"Mr. Montrose, I would recommend you to be cautious," said the doctor, severely; "for let me inform you, young gentleman, that you are not so far removed from suspicion as your friends could wish! Your betrothal to the late Miss Leaton, and your attachment to the present one, are both too well known already. And I assure you, the propriety of your own arrest as an accomplice to this crime was seriously discussed at the inquest."

The cheeks of Malcolm Montrose glowed, his eyes

flashed, and he made one threatening step towards his accuser, then recollecting himself, he dropped his hand, saying:

"No, no, no! you are an old friend of the family, and it is your zeal alone for them that urges you to such indecorous speech and action. And since the wisdom of the coroner's jury was engaged with the question of my arrest, I wish to Heaven they had ordered it! Since they have found a verdict against this most innocent girl, I would to the Lord they had found one against me as her accomplice, that I might stand where she will have to stand; meet what she will have to meet; and endure what she will have to endure! Go, tell the nearest magistrate from me, that in all the felonies Eudora Leaton has committed Malcolm Montrose has been her aider and abettor—nay, her instigator! Tell him, from me, that when Eudora Leaton poisoned her kindred, Malcolm Montrose procured the bane and mixed the drink! Tell him that when Eudora Leaton is in the prison-cell, or waits in the prisoner's dock, or stands upon the scaffold, Malcolm Montrose should be by her side as far the more guilty of the two! Tell him this from me, and get me arrested, and I will thank you!"

"You are mad, Mr. Montrose, as indeed the events of this day are well calculated to make you," replied the doctor.

Then turning to the officer, he said:

"It is getting late; had you not better remove your prisoner?"

"It is some distance to the county goal, sir. Is there such a thing as a chaise in the stables, that I could have the use of to carry her in? or else is there a messenger I could send to the Leaton Arms to fetch one?" inquired the constable.

"There is a chaise in the stables, I know. Go, John, and order it to be got ready," commanded the doctor.

The old servant withdrew to obey. The constable turned to Eudora, and said:

"Miss Leaton, while the chaise is getting ready, you had better be putting on your things."

"Oh, Heaven! is this some dreadful dream or raving madness that has taken possession of me, or is it true that I must leave the house where lie the dead bodies of my kindred, and go—to the county goal, charged with the murder of my nearest relations? Oh, horror! horror! Oh, save me, Malcolm, save me!" she cried, covering her face with her hands as though to shut out some horrid vision, and sinking to the floor.

Montrose stooped and raised her, whispering:

"I will! I will, Eudora! if it is in human power to do it! You need not be taken from here to-night—you must not be! I will see the magistrates myself."

Then turning to the crowd of servants that still lingered in the room, he inquired:

"Have the magistrates yet taken their departure?"

"No, sir; they are taking some refreshments in the dining-room," answered one of the servants.

"Rest here, dear Eudora, until I return," said Montrose, placing her in an easy-chair; and then going to the side of the Italian princess, he said:

"Madame, for Heaven's sake, speak to her."

And he hurried from the chamber, and went down into the dining-room, where the magistrates were sitting over their wine.

He addressed them respectfully, speaking of the approaching storm, the darkness of the night, and the badness of the mountain-roads that lay between Allworth and the county goal; and proposed that as the accused was but a young and delicate girl, she might be permitted to remain at Allworth Abbey through the night.

Mr. Montrose, as the nearest male representative of the Leaton family, might be supposed to have considerable

influence with the magistrates. The latter were, besides, pleased with their day's work, and subdued by the genial influence of the juice of the grape; and the boon that was craved by Malcolm Montrose was not, under the circumstances, unreasonable. Therefore, after some little delay and consultation, it was agreed that the accused should remain at the Abbey through the night, securely locked up in the chamber which she now occupied, and strictly guarded by a pair of constables, one of which was to be placed on the outside of each door.

And Malcolm Montrose was authorized to bear this order to the constable.

Meanwhile Eudora had sunk back in the large chair where he had left her, and covered her face with her hands. The Princess Pezzilini had despatched a servant to the little bed-room of Eudora to fetch her bonnet and shawl. And now she stood beside the chair of the unhappy girl, urging her to arise and prepare herself to accompany the constable, and saying:

"It will all turn out for the best, Bellissima, end how it may. If you are proved innocent you will be set at liberty; if you are proved guilty you will have the privilege of expiating your crime by the death of your body and thus save your soul. So, end as it may, Bellissima, it will all be right."

"But lawk, mum, s'posen she be innocent, and yet be found guilty, as many and many a one have been before her?" suggested Tabitha Tabs, the maid who had now returned with the bonnet and shawl, and stood with them hanging over her arm.

"In that case, my good girl, she will be a martyr, and go to bliss. So, end as it may, it will all be right. We should bow to the will of Heaven," said the princess, piously.

"Can't see it, mum, as it would all be right for the innocent to be conwicted, nor the will of Heaven, nyther,

begging your pardon, mum, for speaking of my poor mind," said Tabby, respectfully.

"You are a simple girl, and need instruction. Now, assist your young mistress to put on her bonnet and shawl. Eudora, stand up, my poor child, and put on your wrappings."

"Yes, Miss, do so if you please, as the storm is rising, and it is getting late, and the roads is horrid between here and the gaol," said the constable, showing signs of impatience.

"Ah, wait! pray wait until Mr. Montrose returns. He went to ask the magistrates if I might be confined here until morning," pleaded Eudora.

"Do your duty, officer! Why do you stand arrested by the prayers of that evil girl? She did not fear to commit crime, she should not fear to meet its consequences. Do your duty at once, for every moment she is permitted to remain beneath this honored roof is an outrage to the memory of those whom she has hurried to their early graves," said the doctor, sternly.

The constable still hesitated, and Eudora still stood with pale face, intense eyes, and clasped hands, silently imploring delay, when the door opened, and Malcolm Montrose entered with the order of the magistrates, commanding Eudora Leaton to be locked in the chamber, under strict guard, until the morning.

"Thank you, thank you! Oh, thank you for this short respite, dear Malcolm!" exclaimed the poor girl, bursting into tears of relief.

Malcolm pressed her hand in silence, and then whispered to her to hope.

The doctor really trembled with rage.

"Very well," he said, "I will see at least, that her present prison is secure. Madame Pezzilini, will your highness condescend to withdraw from the room?" he added, turning respectfully to the princess.

"Good-night, Eudora; repent and pray," said the princess, and bowing graciously to Mr. Montrose and to the doctor, she withdrew.

"Leave the room, and go about your several businesses every man and woman of you! I want this room to myself and the constable," was the next stern order of the doctor to the assembled domestics.

All immediately departed except Tabitha Tabs, who went boldly and placed herself beside her young mistress as a tower of strength.

"Follow your fellow-servants, woman," commenced the doctor.

"When my young lady orders me to do so, sir," replied Tabitha, coldly.

Eudora's left hand was clenched in that of Malcolm Montrose, and she threw out her right hand and grasped that of her humble attendant, exclaiming eagerly:

"Oh, no, no, no, do not leave me, good Tabitha!" For she felt almost safe between the two.

"Not till they tears me away piecemeal with pincers, Miss! for I reckon I'm too big to be forced away all at once," replied Tabitha, violently, drawing up her large person, and looking defiance from her resolute eyes.

"Officers, remove that contumacious girl from the room," said the doctor angrily.

The two constables stepped forward to obey, but Malcolm Montrose dropped the hand of Eudora and confronted them, saying:

"On your peril!"

Then turning to the enraged physician, he said:

"Doctor, nothing but my knowledge of the sincerity of your attachment to the late family enables me to endure the violence of your conduct. But you push your privileges and my patience too far. You have no right to say that this girl shall not remain in attendance upon her unhappy mistress through the night. What harm can she do? Be-

sides, if Miss Leaton is to be guarded by constables placed on the outside of her chamber door, it is but proper that she should have a female attendant in the room with her."

"Very well," said the doctor, grimly, "as far as I am concerned, she may keep her waiting-woman *in;* but I shall take very good care that she herself does not get *out.*"

And so saying, he went immediately to the two high Gothic windows that lighted the vast room, closed the strong oaken shutters, placed the iron bars across them, secured the latter with padlocks, and gave the keys to the head constable, who held the warrant. He next stationed one of the officers on the other side of the door leading to the other rooms of his suite of apartments, directing him to lock the door and keep the key in his pocket. And, finally, having ascertained that all the fastenings of the chamber were well secured, he prepared to withdraw.

Malcolm Montrose pressed the hand of Eudora to his heart, saying:

"Good-night, dearest Eudora. Confide in the God who watches over to deliver innocence." And bending lowly to her ear, he whispered:

"Hope." Then raising his head and looking kindly toward Tabitha, he said:

"Good girl, take great care of your mistress to-night."

"You may trust me for that, sir," answered Miss Tabs, confidently.

And once more pressing the hand of Eudora, he resigned it and withdrew from the room.

The doctor and the head constable followed. They all paused in the hall outside until the constable had double-locked the door, and put the key in his pocket, and taken his station before the room.

"And now I think your prisoner is quite secure, even though you should sleep on your post, officer," said the doctor, with grim satisfaction, as he walked from the spot.

Malcolm Montrose smiled strangely as he followed.

In the hall below they were met by a servant, who announced the arrival of Mr. Carter, the family solicitor, who had asked to see Mr. Montrose, and who had been shown to the library, where he now waited.

Malcolm immediately went thither, and when seated at the writing-table with the attorney, related to him all the details of the household tragedy, and the arrest of Eudora Leaton upon the awful charge of poisoning the whole family.

Even the clear-headed, case-hardened old lawyer was shocked and stupified by the dreadful story. When Malcolm had finished, and the lawyer had recovered his presence of mind, they discussed the affair as calmly as circumstances would permit. The lawyer insisted that the evidence against the accused girl was quite convicting, and that there was not in the whole wide range of human possibility a single chance of her being acquitted; while Malcolm, in agonized earnestness, persisted in upholding her perfect innocence.

"But if *she* did not do it, WHO did it?" pertinently inquired the lawyer.

"Aye, WHO indeed! Conjecture is at a full stand!" answered Malcolm, wiping the drops forced out by mental anguish from his brow.

"Is no one else amenable to suspicion?"

"Not one!"

"Had the late family deeply offended any person, or casually injured any one, or made any enemy?"

"No, no, no; they never wronged or offended a human being, or had an enemy in the world."

"Was there no one whose interest ran counter to those of the late baron and his House?"

"None on earth! Lord Leaton and his family were on the best possible terms with all their friends, acquaintances and dependants. They were widely, deeply, and sincerely beloved."

"It comes back, then, to this; that no one would have

any interest in the extinction of this whole family, except this half-Indian girl, who is their heiress, who it appears attended them in their illness, and prepared and administered the drinks of which they died, and in which the poison was detected—the poison, mark you, of the *Faber Sancta Ignatii*, a deadly product of the East, scarcely known in England, but familiar, no doubt, to this Asiatic girl. Mr. Montrose, the case is very clear," said the lawyer, with an ominous shake of the head.

"Then you think," said the young man, in a tone of anguish, "that if she is brought to trial——"

His voice was choked by his rising agony. He could utter no more.

"I think it as certain as any future event can be in this uncertain world that Eudora Leaton will be condemned and executed for the poisoning of her uncle's family. Mr. Montrose! Good Heavens, sir, you are very ill! You—you have not partaken of any food or drink in this thrice-accursed house, but what you could rely upon?" exclaimed the lawyer, rising up in alarm, and going to the side of the young man, who had fallen back in his chair, his whole form convulsed, his pallid features writhing, and the drops of sweat, wrung from anguish that he vainly endeavored to subdue and control, beading upon his icy brow.

"Mr. Montrose—let me call——"

"No, no," interrupted Malcolm, holding up his hand with an adjuring gesture, and struggling to regain his self-control, for manhood can ill brook to bend beneath the power of suffering.

"No! It is the blow!"

"Then, Malcolm, meet it like a man!" said the lawyer, who began to understand that it was a mental, and not a physical agony that convulsed the strong frame of the young man.

"But she, Eudora, so young and beautiful, so innocent and so beloved, to be hurled down to a destruction so ap-

palling!" burst in groans of anguish from the heaving breast of Malcolm.

He dropped his arms and head upon the table, while sobs of agony convulsed his great chest.

"But I will save her!" he said to himself. "In spite of all this, I will save her. I have staked my life, my soul and honor upon her innocence; and now I will peril that same life, soul, and honor for her deliverance!"

This mental resolution gave him great strength, for at once he resumed the command of himself, arose, apologized to the lawyer for the exhibition of emotion into which he had been betrayed, and would have resumed the conversation in a calmer frame of mind, had not a servant entered and announced supper.

Malcolm begged the lawyer to excuse him for not appearing at the supper table, and also requested him to bear his excuses to the magistrates who had assisted at the coroner's inquest, and who now remained to supper.

The lawyer readily promised to represent Mr. Montrose to the guests, and withdrew for that purpose.

Malcolm arose and paced the library floor, engaged in close thought for about half an hour, and then passed out to seek the privacy of his own chamber.

The whole house was in a painful though subdued bustle.

The members of the coroner's jury, though at liberty to go, had not yet dispersed. The strange fascination that spell-binds men to the scene of any atrocious crime or awful calamity, kept them lingering about the halls and chambers of Allworth Abbey.

The undertaker's people were also in the house making preliminary arrangements for the approaching double funeral. And the servants of the family were continually passing to and fro, waiting upon them.

Malcolm passed through them all and went to his own chamber, locked himself in, and threw himself upon a chair near the bay window that overlooked the Black Pool.

It was a beautiful summer night, and the stars that spangled the clear, blue-black canopy of heaven were reflected on the surface of the Black Pool like jewels upon an Ethiope's dark bosom.

But Malcolm had no eye for the beauty of the starlight night. He was thinking of that black and endless night that had gathered over Eudora's head. He rested his elbow upon the arms of his chair, and bowed his head upon his hand, and thus he sat for more than an hour without changing his position. Then he arose and looked forth from the window, and turned and paced the floor, stopping at intervals to listen. Thus passed another hour. And by this time the troubled household had settled to repose, and all was quiet.

Then Malcolm Montrose left his room, locking the door and taking the key with him, and passed down the long corridor leading to the central upper-hall and the grand staircase. When he entered the hall he saw the constable standing on guard before the chamber-door of the imprisoned girl. The man was wide-awake, on the alert, and touched his hat as Mr. Montrose passed. Malcolm went down the great staircase and through the deserted lower-hall to the main entrance, where he unbarred and unlocked the doors and let himself out.

He took his way immediately to the stables, entered them, drew forth a light chaise, led out a swift horse, put him between the shafts, and finally jumped into the driver's seat, and drove off through the northern gate towards a thickly-wooded part of the park until he reached the ruins of an ancient nunnery. Then he jumped out and fastened his horse to a tree, and sought the cellars of the ruins, reiterating his resolution:

"I have staked my life, soul, and honor upon Eudora's innocence, and now to peril life, soul, and honor for Eudora's salvation!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGE.

"'Tis sure some dream, some vision wild!
What, *I*, of rank and wealth the child,
Am *I* the wretch that bears this shame,
Deprived of freedom, friends and fame?"

THE chamber in which Lady Leaton had died, and where Eudora was imprisoned, had, in the olden time, been the abbot's apartment. It was a vast, dark, gloomy room, now dimly lighted by a lamp that stood upon the mantelshelf.

For a long time after Malcolm Montrose, Dr. Watkins and the constables had withdrawn from the chamber, Eudora remained, crushed back in the depths of the large chair, with her head bowed upon her bosom, her black ringlets falling forward, and half veiling her beautiful dark face, her left hand, that Malcolm had resigned, falling listlessly down by her side, and her right hand still clasped in that of Tabitha, who continued to stand by her side. No word was spoken between them as yet. Eudora was buried in profound, agonizing and bewildering thought, such as always overwhelms the sensitive victim of any sudden and crushing misfortune. The shock of the thunderbolt that had just fallen upon her, devastating her inner life, and leaving the outer so still, and black, and threatening: the vast, dark, sombre room; the dead silence around her—all combined to shake her reason to its centre. In the confusion wrought among nerves, head and brain by this inner storm of sensation, thought and suffering, she was fast losing confidence in heaven, trust in the reality of external circumstances, and even faith in her own identity.

Suddenly she threw herself forward, and tightened her clasp upon Tabitha's hand, with convulsive tone, exclaiming:

"Wake me! wake me, Tabitha! I have the nightmare, and cannot rouse myself. Oh, wake me! wake me, for the love of Heaven!"

Tabitha, whom respect for her mistress's sorrow had hitherto kept silent, now became alarmed for her sanity.

Bending over her with an almost reverential tenderness, she whispered:

"Dear young lady, try to be composed and collect your thoughts, and remember yourself."

"Oh, Heaven! I remember too well! too well!" cried Eudora, in a piercing voice, dropping her face into her hands, and shuddering through her whole frame. "It is no horrible illusion! It is an awful reality! My aunt and cousin are really dead, and I am arrested upon the charge of poisoning them! Oh, horrible! most horrible! Oh, I shall go mad! I shall go mad!" she exclaimed, starting from her chair, casting up her arms, and throwing herself forward upon the floor.

For a moment Tabitha gazed in dismay upon this exhibition of violent emotion in one whom she loved and honored almost to adoration, and then kneeling down beside her, she gently put her arms around her waist to raise her up, whispering in a low, respectful voice:

"Dear young lady, try to recollect yourself, your dignity, your rank, and, above all, your innocence, and put your trust in God!"

Put your trust in God. It was the best advice the simple country-girl could give, but the Archbishop of Canterbury could not have given any better.

Eudora suffered herself to be lifted up and replaced in the deep chair, into which she sank helplessly, and where she remained, with her head propped upon her breast, and her arms fallen upon her lap, in the stupor of despair to which the violence of her anguish had yielded.

Tabitha kneeled at her feet, took her hands, and gazing pleadingly up into her face, said:

"Dear Miss Eudora, look up and hope; all is not lost that is in danger! Have faith in Him who delivered the three innocent children from the fires of the furnace seven times heated. Come, now, let me undress you and help you to bed."

"Into that bed—into that bed whence *her* corpse has just been removed? Oh, never, never! Besides, I could not sleep with the prospect of to-morrow before me, when I shall be taken to the common gaol. How could I sleep? I shall never sleep again! Good girl, leave me to my own thoughts," said Eudora, with a trembling voice and quivering face.

Tabitha spoke no more, but drawing a foot-stool, she sat down at her mistress's feet, and silently held one of her listless hands.

Some time they sat thus: the heavy minutes seemed drawn out to the length of hours. The house was still as death, and the mantle clock was on the stroke of eleven when the quick ears of Tabitha caught a slight, cautious, grating sound in the wainscoted wall on the left of the fireplace. She raised her head, and turned her eyes quickly in the direction of the sound, and with a half-suppressed shriek and a throbbing heart, she saw one of the oak panels slide away, and an anxious face and a warning hand appear at the opening.

The smothered cry of her woman had attracted Eudora's attention; and with the apathy of one plunged so deeply in wretchedness as to fear no farther evil, the unhappy girl followed, with her listless glance, the frightened gaze of her attendant.

At this moment the hand at the opening was extended in an encouraging gesture, and a familiar voice murmured, quickly and softly:

"Hist! hist, Tabitha! Don't be afraid! It is I."

And the next instant the man came through the opening, and Malcolm Montrose stood within the room. He ex-

tended his hand in a warning manner as he approached, saying:

"Hist! hist! for Heaven's love, control yourselves! be composed, and all will be well!"

By this time he stood before the mistress and the maid, who gazed upon him in astonishment indeed, but not in alarm.

"Let us speak in whispers, and then, thanks to the thickness of these walls and doors, we shall not be heard by the policemen on guard. Listen—there are bolts on this side of the chamber doors. Are they drawn fast?"

"No, sir," replied Tabitha, in a hushed voice.

With a sign that they should remain silent and motionless, Malcolm glided on tip-toe, first to one door and then to the other, and cautiously slid the bolts into their sockets, making them both as fast on the inside as they were on the outside.

He then returned to the side of Eudora, and stood for a moment listening intently, and then apparently satisfied that all was well, he murmured:

"Peace be with the worthy king or bishop who built these walls so solidly! The sentinels without have heard nothing."

Then turning to the curious, anxious, and expectant waiting-maid he whispered:

"Tabitha, my good girl, I can depend upon you to aid me in freeing your young lady?"

"Depend upon me? Oh, sir, don't you know and doesn't she know that I would throw myself between her and all that threatens her, and meet it in her stead, if so be I could?" said the brave and devoted girl, in a vehement whisper

"Indeed it will be but little less than that which will be required of you, my good Tabitha."

"Don't doubt me, sir, but try me!" said the young woman, stoutly.

"Well, then, Tabitha, you have first to prepare your

young lady for a hasty journey—thanks to the secret passage leading from the abbot's apartments—to the ruins of the neighboring nunnery, which scandal declares to have been once put to a less worthy use. I have been able to provide the means for her escape. But you, my good girl, will have to remain here to cover her retreat, to face those who will come to seek her in the morning, and to withstand all questions as to how or with whom she left her prison. Are you firm enough for the duty, Tabitha?"

"Let 'em try me, that's all, sir; and if they don't find out as they're met their match this time, I'm not a woman, but a muff. They may send me to prison, or they may hang me if they like. But I defy them to make me speak when I don't want to speak!"

"They can do you no real harm, my girl, be sure of that. They would only threaten and frighten you at most."

"Frighten who? Lawks, sir, you don't know me; I aint made of frightenable stuff. But, sir, how we talk! won't they know at once that my young lady got off through that secret passage of which you speak?"

"No; for its very existence is unknown or forgotten. It was only accident that discovered it to me some years ago, when I was delving among the ruins of the convent, and found in one of the cellars its other terminus. I entered it to thread its mazes; I should have been smothered but for the many crooked crevices in its rocky roof that let in the air. I found that it led to a steep narrow staircase; ascending it, I found myself opposite a panel, the character of which I could see by means of the narrow lines of light around its old and shrunken frame, light that evidently came from the opposite side. Curiosity got the better of discretion, and I worked away at the panel and slipped it aside, when, to my dismay, I found myself looking in upon the privacy of Lady Leaton's sleeping-chamber, which was fortunately then empty. It was this, which was in the

olden time the apartment of the Abbot. I was but a boy then, and being frightened at what I had done, I hastily replaced the panel and retreated, and never mentioned my adventure to any one. Afterwards, consulting the guide-book, I found that there was a mere tradition of a secret passage leading from the Abbey to the Convent, which scandal asserted to have been used by the master here when going to rendezvous with some fair nun; but of the precise locality of this secret passage, or even of its actual existence, the book did not pretend to speak with authority. Once I mentioned the tradition to my uncle and aunt, but they disregarded it as mere romance, and I kept my own counsel, and deferred the mention of my discovery to some future occasion. But to-night I have turned my knowledge of the secret passage to some account; to-night, once more I have threaded its mazes, and find myself in this chamber. I shall conduct Miss Leaton through this passage to the other outlet in the cellars of the ruined convent; there I have a chaise to carry her off. Farther than this, I need not tell you. And I have told you this much, first, because I believe you fully worthy of the confidence, and secondly, that being possessed of the real facts, you may be on your guard against cross-questioning as well as against threats, and so be able to baffle inquiry as well as to withstand browbeating," said Malcolm Montrose.

"Oh, never you fear me, sir; I will never give Miss Leaton's enemies the satisfaction of knowing as much as I know," said Tabitha, firmly.

The young man had addressed himself first to the maid, not only to secure her immediate sympathy and co-operation, but also to afford Miss Leaton time to recover from her surprise, compose her spirits and collect her thoughts.

Now he turned to Eudora, who had been much agitated by the infusion of new hope into her despair, but who now controlling herself, sat quietly, though intently listening, and addressing her with reverential tenderness, he said:

"And now, dearest Eudora, rouse yourself; collect all your energies, and prepare for your immediate flight."

She looked at him intently for a moment, and then in a faltering voice said:

"But oh, is it right? Ought I, who am as innocent as a child of that which they charge me with, ought I, like a guilty creature, to fly from justice? Think of it well, and then answer me, for I can rely upon your wisdom as well as upon your honor."

"Eudora," said the young man in a solemn voice, "it is not from *justice* that I counsel you to fly, for you are innocent as you say, and the innocent have nothing to fear from justice; if there was a shadow of a hope that you would meet justice, my tongue should be the last to advise, my hand the last to assist your escape. No, Eudora, it is not from *justice*, but from the cruelest injustice—from murder, from martyrdom that I would snatch you!"

"Yet still think once more. You grant that I am innocent. Conscious of that innocence, ought I not to have courage enough to meet the trial, and faith enough to trust in God for deliverance?" inquired the girl gravely.

"Trust in God, by all means, through all things, and to any extent: but exercise that trust by wisely embracing the means He has provided for your escape rather than by madly remaining to meet swift and certain destruction."

"But yet—but yet it seems weak and wrong for the innocent to fly like the guilty!" said Eudora, hesitatingly.

"Does it? Then I will give you Scripture warrant and example for the course! When Herod sent forth and slew the infants in Galilee, did the parents of the child Jesus tarry in Bethlehem because he was innocent and even Divine? No; warned by the angel, they fled into Egypt. In after years, when Jesus went about preaching and teaching through Jerusalem, and when the high priests sought Him to kill Him, did He tarry in deadly peril because He was innocent, holy, and Divine? No! He withdrew into the

Mount of Olives, or entered a ship, and put off from the land, because His hour had not yet come! Oh, Eudora! it is not faith but presumption that tempts you to remain and face sure and sudden ruin," urged the young man, in impassioned earnestness, while he gazed in an agony of anxiety upon her countenance.

Eudora shuddered through her whole frame, but remained silent.

"Oh, Heaven, Eudora!" he continued, "why do you still hesitate? Must I set the truth before you in all its ghastly realities? I must, I must, for time presses, and the danger is imminent! Listen, most unhappy girl! You are here a prisoner, charged with the most atrocious crime that ever cursed humanity; that charge is supported by a mass of evidence that would crush an archangel! To-morrow morning you will be removed from this room to the common gaol. Next week the assizes will be held; you will be brought to trial; you will be overwhelmed beneath an avalanche of evidence! and then—oh, Heaven, Eudora! but two short weeks will elapse between the sentence of the judge and the execution of the prisoner! In less than one little month from this you will be murdered—martyred!" exclaimed the young man in thrilling, vehement, impassioned whispers, while the agitation of his whole frame, and the perspiration that streamed from his flushed brow, exhibited the agony of his anxiety.

With a smothered shriek, the unhappy girl fell back in her chair, and covered her face with her hands, as though to shut out the scene of horror that had been called up before her imagination.

"Fly, Eudora! fly at once! fly with me, and I will place you in safety, where you may remain until Providence shall bring the truth to light, the guilty to justice, and your innocence to a perfect vindication! Fly! fly, Eudora! It would be madness to stay!"

"I will! I will fly!" she exclaimed, in a hurried whisper, as she started up.

Tabitha snatched up the black bonnet and shawl that had been brought in on the preceding evening for a far different purpose, and hastily assisted her mistress to put them on. She tied the little bonnet strings under her chin, and tied the black crape veil over her face. Then she wrapped the shawl carefully around her form, doubling its folds twice over her chest to protect it from the chill of the night air, for Eudora's Asiatic temperament would ill bear exposure in this climate of cold mists, and pronounced her ready for her journey.

As Malcolm looked anxiously upon her, he saw that her simple, plain dress of deep mourning was admirably well calculated for her escape and her journey, for it revealed nothing of her social position, since the wearer of such a dress might be the daughter of a tradesman or the child of an earl.

"And now, my good girl, we must take leave of you at once. Remember that no one can harm you; therefore be firm in refusing to give any clue to the manner of Miss Leaton's escape," said Malcolm Montrose, shaking hands with the faithful attendant.

"Never you doubt, sir; they shall draw me apart with wild horses before they draw any information from me," said Tabitha, firmly.

"Good-bye, dear girl; I hope, and trust, and pray that you may come to no evil through your devotion to me," said Eudora, kissing her humble friend.

"Never you fear, Miss; if anybody comes to grief in this chase, it won't be her as is hunted, but them as hunts, which is as much as to say it won't be Tabitha Tabs!" said the latter, valiantly.

After once more pressing the hand of her faithful maid, Eudora followed Malcolm through the secret opening, leaving the brave Tabitha alone in the chamber.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE FLIGHT.

"Fly, lady, fly before the wind!
The moor is wild and waste,
The hound of blood is close behind,
Haste! gentle lady, haste!"

After closing the sliding panel behind him, and carefully adjusting it in its place, Malcolm took the hand of his companion to guide her down the narrow, steep and dangerous steps that led to the secret passage. This caution was the more needful, as it was so dark that only Malcolm's previous knowledge of the passage enabled him to feel his own way and guide his companion through it.

Something like an hundred perpendicular steps brought them down to a low and narrow archway, not unlike the entrance to a rudely constructed tunnel.

Although it was still quite dark, and Malcolm, drawing his companion after him, was obliged to grope his way along this tunnel, yet occasional sharp drafts of wind proved that there existed certain irregular crevices in the rocks overhead that in the daytime admitted a little light as well as air, although their winding or crooked formation might prevent any one on the ground above seeing or suspecting the existence of the subterranean passage beneath their feet. As this tunnel took nearly a straight line to the old nunnery, a walk of about ten minutes brought Malcolm and Eudora to the other terminus that admitted them to the lower cellars under the ruins.

When they had emerged from the tunnel into these cellars, Malcolm paused and carefully collected bricks, stones, and other fallen portions of the building, with which he choked up and concealed the narrow opening.

Then taking the hand of Eudora, he led her from the cellars up into the outer air.

Here, in the ruined chapel, they found the pony-chaise fastened to a young oak tree that grew within what had once been the grand altar of the chapel of the convent.

He led the horse out to the road, and then returned and conducted Eudora to the chaise, placed her in it, took the seat by her side, and drove rapidly off. A drive of ten minutes brought them to a rural railway station.

Up to this time no word had been spoken between them, so intense had been the anxiety of both. But now, when he had alighted and fastened his horse to a tree, and came to the chaise to hand her out, he whispered:

"Draw down your veil, Eudora, and keep it down."

She silently obeyed, and he handed her out and led her into the office of the station.

"Two first-class tickets to London," he said to the clerk behind the little office-windows.

They were supplied to him.

"When does the London train pass here?" he next inquired.

"In half an hour, sir."

"That will do," replied Mr. Montrose. Then, drawing the arm of Eudora within his own, he conducted her to the waiting-room.

It was empty.

"Remain here, dearest Eudora, until I return. I shall be back in twenty minutes. It is not likely that any one will come in here during my absence, as very few first-class lady passengers take the train at this station at this hour; nevertheless, keep your veil down," said Malcolm, as he placed her in a chair in a dark corner of the room. He then pressed her hand, left her, and hurried out to the place where he had left the pony-chaise.

He unhitched the horse, mounted the driver's seat, and drove madly off towards Allworth. So fiercely he drove

that in ten minutes he reached the stables, and returned the horse bathed in sweat and covered with foam to his stall. He replaced the chaise in the carriage-house, and then set off in a run toward the railway station. He could not run quite so fast as a horse could gallop, and so the distance accomplished by the pony in ten minutes occupied him fifteen.

It wanted, therefore, but about five minutes to the passing of the train when he rejoined Eudora in the waiting-room.

Besides Eudora, he found two gentlemen and one lady in the same room. They seemed, also, to belong to the same party, for they walked and talked together; and the subject of their conversation was that which then formed the topic of the whole neighborhood, and which was destined soon to form the topic of the whole kingdom—the tragedy of Allworth Abbey!

"They say," observed the lady, "that it is incontrovertibly proved that this Asiatic girl, Eudora Leaton, was the poisoner, and that her motive was the inheritance of the estate. One can scarcely believe in such depravity in one so young as this girl is represented to be."

"Crime is of no age or sex, madam; and from all that we can hear, it seems abundantly proved that this young girl actually *did* poison the whole family," replied the old gentleman addressed, whom Malcolm now, with extreme anxiety, recognized as a neighbor, Admiral Brunton, of the Anchorage, near Abbeytown.

"Good Heaven, what a fiend she must be! But she is young, beautiful, high-born, and very accomplished. Do you think that if she is convicted they will really hang her?"

"Hang her? Yes; the young demon! They will hang her as surely as they did Palmer. English juries have no mercy on the secret poisoner. And the fact of this one being a young, beautiful, and high-born girl, only makes her crime the more unnatural and monstrous!"

"But, admiral, it is hard to believe that so lovely a creature could be such a monster," said the lady.

"Bah! bah! madam; you have not read history, or you have forgotten it. Remember the Countess of Essex, Madame Brinvilliers, Lucretia Borgia, Mary Stuart, and many other young, beautiful, and high-born devils. Human nature is the same in all ages and countries. The youth, beauty, and high-birth of this young Asiatic fiend will no more save her from the gallows than the same sort of charms saved Brinvilliers or Mary Stuart from the block!" replied the old gentleman, savagely.

Shudder after shudder passed over the frame of the unfortunate subject of these severe remarks, as she sat an unsuspected hearer of the conversation.

Malcolm, standing by her side, with his back to the speakers, could only seek to sustain her courage by an earnest pressure of her hand. It was but an ordeal of five minutes, and then the shrill whistle of the advancing train warned all the passengers to hurry to the platform.

The conversing party dropped their interesting subject, and hastened away.

Malcolm, drawing Eudora's arm within his own, hurried after them.

When they arrived upon the platform the train had stopped, and the engine was noisily puffing and blowing like a short-winded alderman out of breath after a run.

Passengers were hurrying into the various carriages.

"Can we have a *coupé*?" inquired Malcolm, slipping a crown into the hands of one of the guards.

"Oh, yes, sir," answered that functionary, opening a door and admitting the fugitives into the desired privacy.

"Sweethearts!" he muttered to himself, as he locked the door and pocketed the crown.

The train started, and Malcolm and Eudora, finding themselves alone in the *coupé*, looked in each other's faces wistfully.

"Oh, Malcolm," said Eudora, "how terrible it is to be so wronged and hated, and by one's old family friends, too! Did you hear old Admiral Brunton, how he spoke of me? Ah! little did he think how near at hand I was to hear him."

"Yes, dear Eudora, I heard him. His remarks were valuable, only to show how right you are to fly until this storm shall pass," replied the young man.

"But to be wronged and hated so, Malcolm, and by my uncle's old friends! Oh! it is very, very cruel!"

"You must bear up under it bravely, dear love. The time will come when your innocence will be proved, and then those very friends who wrong you by their suspicions now will bitterly repent their injustice, and will love and esteem you more than ever before," answered the young man, encouragingly.

The train rattled on. It was the express, and stopped at no other station between Abbeytown and London, where it was expected to arrive at five o'clock in the morning.

Malcolm and Eudora sank back in their seats, and fell into silence.

Eudora relapsed into despair, and Malcolm sank into thought. He had taken her from confinement and immediate danger, but not perhaps from quick pursuit and re-arrest. In the plan of her instant deliverance his decision and his action had necessarily been so prompt and rapid, that no time had been left him to determine upon any fixed place of refuge for the fugitive. His only general idea had been to fly with her, and conceal her in the multitudinous wilderness of London, until he could arrange her escape to the Continent. He wished above all things to make her his own by marriage as soon as they should reach the city; but he knew that to do so would expose her to certain discovery. He felt therefore obliged to defer this purpose until he could escape with her to the Continent.

To attempt to take her from England immediately he

knew would be to expose her to the certainty of arrest. For, according to the usual practice, as soon as her escape should be discovered, which it must inevitably be in a few hours, telegrams he knew would be despatched to the police of every sea-port to anticipate her arrival and to intercept her passage.

To hide her, therefore, in the crowds of London until the first heat of the pursuit should be over, then to escape with her to some foreign country, and there unite his fate with hers for good or ill forever—and then wait patiently until Providence should bring the truth to light, by discovering the guilty and vindicating her innocence—seemed the only plan that promised any success.

"But where in London should he leave her?" It must be in a part of the town far distant from the terminus of the Great Northern Railway; it must be in a thickly-populated neighborhood, where the presence even of a remarkable stranger should not attract the slightest notice; it must be in lodgings over some small busy shop, where the people shouldbe too much occupied with their own concerns to pry into those of others.

After much close thought, Malcolm fixed upon the Borough as the neighborhood of their destination. Lodgings of the description he wished to find for Eudora were not scarce in that locality.

Having settled this point to his satisfaction, the next thing to be considered was under what name and character, and with what pretext, he should leave her in her destined lodgings. To introduce her by her real name would be certain destruction, since, before another twenty-four hours, that name—connected with a horrible crime—would be widely blown over England. To pass her under an assumed name, though the extreme exigency of the circumstances might almost seem to justify the deception, was an idea abhorrent to his truthful, honorable and high-toned nature. The longer he thought of this difficulty the

more insurmountable it seemed. Occupied with this problem, which any one of less delicate scruples would have quickly solved, Malcolm did not once speak again to his companion, even to attempt to rouse her from the fit of despondency into which she had again fallen.

Meantime the train flew over the sterile heaths of Yorkshire, and in due time entered the more cultivated country nearer the great metropolis.

At last, rousing himself desperately, he said to his companion:

"Eudora, dearest, have you any middle name?"

"Yes; I was christened Eudora Milnes; but I never use my middle name, and, indeed, never did; it is quite a dead letter," replied the girl, in surprise at the question.

"So much the better. I cannot endure the idea of your passing under a fictitious name, and yet you must not be known as Eudora Leaton. I shall therefore call you Miss Milnes; do not forget it. And if your other name is marked upon any of your clothing, do not fail to cut it out, lest it should meet the eye of your laundress. As you bring no clothing with you, you will have to procure a small supply from some outfitter, and be sure to order them marked 'E. Milnes.' They will think 'E' stands for Emily, or Eliza, or some such common name. Dear girl, I trust these precautions will not long be needful," said Malcolm, endeavoring to infuse into her heart a hope that he himself was far from feeling.

The train flew onward, and soon the lights of London were seen to the southward before them.

Day was dawning when the train arrived at the King's-cross station.

"Now, my dearest Eudora, you must trust yourself entirely to me, believing that I will do all that is best for your safety," said Malcolm, as the train stopped.

"I am sure that you will, my best and only friend; be-

sides, who in the world have I now to trust in but yourself?" said Eudora, in deep emotion.

"You shall never regret the confidence you place in me, Eudora," replied Malcolm, earnestly.

At this moment the guard opened the door. He was the same man who had put them into the *coupé* at the Abbeytown Station; and in grateful remembrance of the crown-piece given him by Mr. Montrose, he now politely inquired if the gentleman wanted a cab, and offered to call one.

Malcolm perceived at once that this man would be sure to remember himself and his black-veiled companion, and would be able to describe her appearance if inquiries should be made of him, as they were nearly certain to be. He felt, therefore, the necessity of throwing the man off the scent of his own purposed course. With this design, he inquired:

"When does the next train start for Liverpool?"

"At five thirty, sir."

"Then you may call me a cab at once," said Mr. Montrose, handing his companion from the *coupé*, and leading her through the station.

The cab drew up.

The officious guard held the door open until Mr. Montrose had put his companion in and taken his seat beside her.

"Where shall I order the man to drive, sir?" asked the guard.

"To Euston-square Station, of course," replied Mr. Montrose.

"A runaway match, as sure as shooting. They didn't even stop to take their luggage," said the guard to himself, as he closed the door.

The order was given, and the carriage started.

It was a dark, foggy morning, into which broad day seemed unable to break. The streets were at this hour half-deserted, and very dreary. The carriage rattled noisily over the stones between closed shops and darkened houses, and drew up before Euston-square Station.

Here the scene was much busier. A crowd of carriages of all descriptions were continually drawing up or driving off. A multitude of people were pouring in and out of the building, for one train had just arrived, and another was just about to start.

Mr. Montrose alighted, handed out his companion, and paid and dismissed the cab. And at the same moment a newly-arrived traveller stepped up, engaged the same cab, and ordered the man to drive to "Mivart's."

And Mr. Montrose, glad that this possible witness to his next proceedings was taken out of the way, led Eudora into the station. It was very much crowded, and the space before the ticket-windows was thronged. While Malcolm debated with himself whether he should carry his *ruse* so far as actually to lead Eudora up to the first-class window and take tickets, he saw a gentleman and a young lady in deep mourning, closely veiled, go up and get two first-class tickets to Liverpool.

"That will do," said Malcolm to himself. "Should inquiries be pushed to this extent, that party may pass very well for her they seek."

Then drawing Eudora's arm within his own, and joining the throng of newly-arrived passengers that were passing from the station, he went forth. Taking an opposite direction from that of the place at which they had first been set down, he called another cab, placed Eudora in, took his seat by her side, and ordered the man to drive to St. Paul's churchyard

It was now broad daylight, and all London was waking up and throwing open its windows. As they drove along, Mr. Montrose said to his wondering companion :

"Now, my dearest Eudora, though you ask me no questions concerning this strange proceeding, I must give you an explanation. I have acted thus in order to throw your pursuers off the scent; for if that railway-guard who attended us at Abbeytown and at the King's-cross station,

should be examined by the police, as is most likely, though he may be able to describe your person, dress, and appearance in such an accurate manner as to leave no doubt upon their minds that it was yourself who came up to London by the night train, yet, mark me, he will say that on reaching the King's-cross terminus you took a cab to the Euston-square Station to catch the 'five thirty' down train to Liverpool. The cabman who took us down will support his evidence, and even the clerk of the first-class ticket-office will corroborate both testimonies by remembering a young lady in deep mourning, who took a first-class ticket for that train to Liverpool. Thus being thrown off the true scent by my ruse, they will think that you have gone down to Liverpool with the purpose of escaping by one of the outward-bound steamers, while you may repose unsuspected and securely in London."

"But," said Eudora, anxiously, "since I have fled, had I not better continue my flight? Had I not better escape at once to some foreign country?"

"It would be impossible for you to do so at present, Eudora. I must tell you why. In an hour or two from this time your flight will be discovered at Allworth. In the same hour telegrams will be despatched to the police of every seaport on the coast of England to intercept you if you should attempt to pass. These telegrams will reach their destinations before you could possibly arrive at any seaport, and you would be arrested immediately upon your arrival."

"Oh, Lord of Heaven! that I, that I should be so hunted! hunted as though I were a wild beast!" exclaimed Eudora, shuddering with terror.

"Many a fair and good queen and princess has been so hunted before you, dear girl! Even in recent times your own friend, the heroic Princess Pezzilini, was obliged to fly for her life! Emulate her heroism, dear girl," said Malcolm, earnestly pressing her hand.

"Ah! but she was not dishonored by the charge of a foul and monstrous crime. Her offence was a political one, and her very flight was honorable. There is no parallel between her case and mine," moaned the poor girl.

"Take courage and have patience, dear Eudora, while I speak of our future plans," said Malcolm, affectionately pressing her hand.

"Ah, I will! I will be courageous and patient! I ought not to complain of any affliction so long as Heaven has left me so true a friend!"

"Thank you, dear Eudora, for that tribute. Listen now, dearest; I will take you to some safe and honorable retreat, and leave you there for the present. When the first heat of the pursuit is over, when it will be safe to do so, I will take you down to some one of the seaports, and escape with you to America. There you will give me this dear hand in marriage. There I will work for our mutual support until the course of time and Providence shall have cleared you of this false and dreadful charge, and paved the way for our happy return! This is my plan, Eudora! How do you like it?"

"Oh, Heaven bless and reward you, Malcolm, who sacrifice yourself to save the poor lost girl, whom there is none either to pity or to succor!" exclaimed Eudora, fervently.

They had now turned into St. Paul's churchyard, which was all alive with the commencement of the business of the day. Malcolm kept his gaze out of the window, as if in search of some particular place. At length, when they had got just opposite to a ladies' out-fitting establishment, he stopped the cab, paid and dismissed it, and led Eudora towards the shop.

"I deem it safest, dearest, to change at every place we stop. Go in there now, and purchase things as you may require, and have them packed in a box, with your name, 'Miss Milnes,' written upon it. I will remain outside until you have completed your business."

Eudora entered the shop, and was promptly served with everything that she needed.

When she appeared at the door, with a shop-girl bearing the box behind her, Malcolm hailed an empty cab that was passing by, entered it with Eudora and her purchases, and gave the brief order:

"To the White Swan Hotel, Borough."

A rapid drive of twenty minutes brought them to the house.

Here Malcolm discharged the cab and entered the hotel, leading Eudora, and followed by a porter carrying her box.

He asked to be shown into a private sitting-room, and ordered breakfast immediately for two.

The waiter hastened to obey; and while breakfast was being prepared, Malcolm persuaded Eudora to lay off her bonnet and shawl, and repose in an easy-chair.

A comfortable meal of coffee, muffins, fresh eggs and ham was soon spread, and Malcolm led his companion to the table, saying:

"Come, eat, dear Eudora; nature must be sustained, even through the direst afflictions."

She drank a cup of coffee, and ate an egg and a small piece of bread. When breakfast was over, Malcolm said:

"You will stop and rest here for an hour, dearest, while I take a walk in search of suitable lodgings for you. You will not be anxious or frightened to be left alone?"

"I will try not to be so," she answered.

He pressed her hand and left the parlor.

As he passed through the coffee-room on his way out, he heard the visitors and loungers discussing the news in that morning's *Times*. Some topic of unusual interest seemed to occupy them. Malcolm's heart stood still as he caught some detached portions of their conversation.

"I recollect perfectly well when the baron died a few months ago. There was a suspicion of his having been

poisoned; and now to think of the whole family being destroyed in that way!—and by one young girl to whom they had been so very kind, too! What a young devil she must be!" said one.

"Oh, she comes from India, it appears. And India is the native land of devils, as we have good reason to know since the revolt of the Sepoys," said another.

"Well, it is a good thing that the unnatural young monster is in custody. If she isn't hung the gallows might as well be put down altogether; but she is safe to be, for this beats Palmer all hollow."

Malcolm heard no more. With a sinking heart he hurried out into the air, and took his way down the street, and began to tread the narrow lanes and alleys of the neighborhood in search of such lodgings as he desired for Eudora. At length, about half way down, between the two crossings of a narrow street, he paused before a small green-grocer's shop bearing the name of Mrs. Corder, over which a bill in an upper window announced "Apartments." He entered the shop, and behind the counter found the proprietress, a fat, middle-aged, motherly-looking widow, with a large number of children, who were continually toddling in and out between the little dark back parlor and the front shop.

Stepping up to the counter, he asked the woman to show him the apartments she had to let.

"Here, Charley," said Mrs. Corder, calling her eldest hope, a red-haired lad of about ten years old, "to take her place while she showed the gentleman the rooms above."

"The lodgers have a private entrance, sir," she said, leading the way out of the shop to a street door on its right hand, which admitted them into a narrow passage, from which an equally narrow staircase led to the second floor.

Mr. Montrose followed the landlady up-stairs to a pair of small, plainly furnished, but clean rooms, connected by

folding doors. The front one was a parlor, the back one a chamber.

"What are your terms?" inquired Mr. Montrose, when he had glanced approvingly around these rooms.

"Twenty-five shillings a week, sir, with attendance," replied Mrs. Corder.

"Have you other lodgers?"

"No others, sir, except a poor gentleman and his daughter as have the rooms over these, and has never paid me a penny for 'em," added the woman, in a low tone, but loud enough to be heard.

"I will engage these rooms, for a lady, who will take possession immediately; and here is four weeks' payment in advance."

Mrs. Corder curtsied lowly in acknowledgment of this liberality, and promised to have fires lighted immediately to air the apartments.

And Mr. Montrose hurried back to the White Swan, where he found Eudora still resting in the easy-chair, and awaiting him.

"I have found you lodgings, dearest, where I hope and believe you will be both comfortable and safe. They are over a small green grocer's shop kept by a stout, rosy good-humored-looking widow, with a large family of young children. And with her shop, her children, and her lodgers to attend to, she is much too busy to pry into other peoples' private affairs. You may get ready now while I call a carriage," said Malcolm, and without waiting to hear her warm thanks, he passed out.

In two minutes he returned, and led his companion, who was quite ready, to the carriage. Her box was put in, and the directions given to the coachman, who drove on.

A quarter of an hour's drive brought them to the private entrance of Mrs. Corder's house. The good-humored landlady stood at the door to receive her new lodger.

Mr. Montrose alighted, handed Eudora out, and led her

into the house, followed by the coachman carrying the box, which he sat down in the passage.

"Poor girl," murmured the landlady to herself, as she noticed the deep mourning and pale face of her guest. "Poor girl! an orphan, I dare say—some clergyman's daughter come up to London to get her living as a daily governess or something. She do look like that. But lawk, she'll never be able to pay twenty-five shillings a week for her lodgings, and that she'll soon find out. Hows'ever, the gentleman has paid the first month in advance, and maybe he may——. Lawk, I wonder whatever he is to her——"

"This is my cousin, Miss Milnes, who is to be your new lodger, Mrs. Corder. Will you please to show her at once to her rooms?" said Mr. Montrose, who, having settled with the man, now turned and presented his companion to her landlady.

"Yes, certainly, sir; the rooms are quite ready. I'm proud to see you, Miss Miller—that's a real governessing name, is Miller," added the landlady, *sotto voce*, as she led the way up-stairs, and threw open the door of the front parlor.

Malcolm and Eudora entered the room, and the landlady lingered to receive orders.

"You may have the box sent up, if you please, Mrs. Corder," said Mr. Montrose, to get rid of the good woman, who dropped a curtsey and withdrew.

"Now, dearest Eudora," said the young man, "for your own sake I must hasten to leave you. I must hurry back to Allworth Abbey, that no one may suspect that I have been so far absent from the neighborhood, or connect my absence with your disappearance. My presence is also necessary to assist at the funeral obsequies at Allworth. So you perceive, dearest, that I must immediately depart.

"Oh, yes, I know that for every good reason you must go," said Eudora.

"And this advice I must give in leaving you—keep your-

self closely within doors! send the landlady or her son out for whatever you may require—but go not forth yourself. If time hangs heavily on your hands, send for books from Mudie's Circulating Library, a branch of which stands near this. Do not risk writing to any one, not even to me, unless it should be positively necessary; and, if you do write, be careful neither to put address nor date at the top of your letter, nor name of any sort at the bottom; and direct your letter to Howth, a post town about twenty miles from Allworth. Do you mark me, dear Eudora?"

"Oh, yes, I mark, and I will remember and follow your directions."

"I will write to you under your middle name of Milnes, and post my letters at Howth. Now, dearest, trust in God—trust also in me; keep up your spirits, and hope for the best. You will be quite safe here, as you know the hunt for you will be led off in an opposite direction. Your landlady is evidently a good-humored, obliging, unsuspicious creature, who will endeavor to make you comfortable. If she should betray any curiosity upon the subject of my interest in you, tell her so much of the truth as that we are betrothed, but avoid telling her my name; she will probably believe it to be the same as your own. Will you remember all these things?"

"Oh, yes, yes, dearest Malcolm!" said Eudora, endeavoring to control her emotions.

"And now, my beloved, I have not a moment more to stay, for I must catch the train. Good-bye! good-bye! I leave you in the keeping of Him who ever watches over the innocent," said Malcolm, pressing her to his bosom in a parting embrace. Then he put her gently back into her chair, and hurried from the room.

On the stairs he met the boy bringing up the box, and in the passage below he saw the landlady.

"I have taken leave of my cousin, Mrs. Corder; but I must commit her to your best care. She has lost both her

parents, and is in deep sorrow, as well as in reduced circumstances; she never lived in lodgings before, and is very inexperienced. Therefore, I must beg that you will be a kind of mother to her," said Mr. Montrose, slipping another five-pound note into the hand of the woman as he took leave of her.

"Thank'ee, sir; lawks, sir, I'm a poor widder, with a large family, but I don't require no bribery to do my duty by my lodgers, nor likewise to be good to a poor, dear, fatherless, motherless young creature like her," said the landlady, pocketing the money.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ANNELLA.

"She is our perplexity,
A creature light and wild;
Though on the verge of beggary,
As careless as a child."

When the door had closed behind Malcolm Montrose, and Eudora was left alone in her strange lodgings for the first time in her life, then all the extreme miseries of her position rushed back upon her memory, and despair overwhelmed her soul.

To be charged with an unnatural and monstrous crime, at the very name of which her pure heart shuddered;—to be hunted like a wild beast;—to be hiding like a burrowing fox;—the situation was terrible in its danger; but oh, how much more terrible in its degradation! And through all her own personal consciousness of wrong, shame, sorrow, and peril, two questions continually forced themselves upon her attention:

Who was the poisoner of her uncle's family?

WHAT was the motive for the fell deed?

Although the last two days had been a season of unexampled distress, excitement, and fatigue—and although for the last three nights she had not once closed her eyes in slumber—yet she could not now rest for one moment in her chair.

She started up with her hands pressed to her throbbing and burning temples, and with a distracted manner and irregular steps paced the floor.

One of the most perplexing elements in her misery was that she could not adequately comprehend her own situation. She understood "a horror" in her state, but not her state. Knowing her own innocence, it seemed to her absolutely incredible that every one else should not know it also, and monstrous that any one should suspect her of crime, and especially of such an atrocious crime. She could not fully credit the fidelity of her own memory, the evidence of her own experience, or the testimony of her own senses. She was haunted with a vague suspicion that this was all a frightful dream, from which she should presently awake in surprise and joy.

This distrust of the actual is a dangerous state of mind, being the intermediate stage between the last extremity of mental suffering and the insanity to which it tends. Just as the wretched girl was beginning to lose herself in these metaphysical miseries the real world broke in upon her with the voice of her landlady, who was heard outside the door, saying:

"Here, Charley, set down the box; I'll take it in myself; and now you go, like a clever boy, and mind the shop till I come."

There was a sound of the box set down upon the floor and of the retreat of Charley down the stairs, and then a rap at the door.

"Come in," said Eudora, pausing in her walk.

The landlady entered, and inquired:

"Where will you have this set, Miss Miller?"

"In my chamber," replied Eudora, in a startled voice, like one suddenly roused from a dream.

Our landlady looked wistfully at her, and after depositing the box in a corner of the bed-room, she came back, and in a motherly manner took Eudora by the hand, and made her sit down again in the arm-chair, while she stood by her and said:

"Now, don't ye take on so, that's a darling! Sure we've all got to lose our parents, unless we ourselves die afore our time. I've lost my mother and father; yes, and the father of my thirteen children, too! And *I* don't take on about it! Sure if I did the house would go to ruin and the children to the union! And then there's that poor child up-stairs, with a father as is worse nor dead, coming home every night drunk, and beating and starving her nearly to death! Why, *she* don't take on, but is as merry as a monkey, with her lantern jaws and large eyes. And more be token, if it wasn't for the child, I'd ha' sent the father packing long ago, which he has never paid me the first penny of rent for his rooms the six weeks he has been here, and swears at me when I ask him for it! So you see, dear, everybody has their own troubles in this world, but for all that we musn't take on about it, but must do the best we can for ourselves and each other too. Now I make no doubt you would be the greatest of blessings to that young girl up-stairs, and she'd be the best of amusement to you! *She'd* take you off your sorrows; she's the liveliest, queerest, funniest——There, *that's* her now! Listen!"

At this moment a bounding step was heard upon the stairs, and a carolling voice broke forth in song:

> "I care for nobody—no, not I!
> And nobody cares for me!"

as the singing-girl vanished up into the upper stories of the house.

"There! that's her! she's always just like that! Now it's ten to one as that child will have any dinner this day, yet listen how she sings like a lark! Shall I go and fetch her down to you? She'd be a world of entertainment to you!"

"Oh, no, no, not for the world. I am not fit for any company, least of all for that of a light-hearted girl. Yet I thank you for the kind thought," replied Eudora.

"Well, then, dear, since you are too heavy-hearted to be soothed by anything lively, you must try to interest yourself in something serious—anything to take your mind off from brooding over your own troubles," said the landlady, and taking a folded newspaper from her pocket, she added:

"Now here, here's this morning's *Times* as I've been and borrowed from the library at the corner, o' purpose to read the true account of this horrible poisoning case up in the North! Lawk! only to think of it, my dear—a whole family p'isoned by one young girl, and she their own orphan niece as they fotched over from Indy, and did so much for! But they've *got* her, that's a comfort! they've *got* her safe enough! She'll never get off! To think of any young girl being of such a born devil and coming for to be hung at last. Lawk! it do make my blood run cold."

"But how do you know that she poisoned the family?" asked Eudora, in a faltering voice, and with a shudder that she could not control.

"Lawk! dear, it's all as clear as a sunshiny noonday. Here, read it for yourself. I see my landlord coming across the street towards the house, and he's a-coming after his money, which, thanks to Mr. Miller's liberality, I have got all ready for him." And so saying, the landlady put the *Times* into the hands of her panic-stricken lodger and went away down-stairs and into her shop, where she found her surly landlord waiting.

"Well, mum," began the latter, turning a contemptuous glance around the little shop, "I have come to tell you that

I will not wait another day! There are now two quarters' rent due, and if the money is not forthcoming I intend to sell you out. You needn't tell me any more about lodgers that can't pay; if you *will* keep paupers in the house you must take the consequence."

"Mr. Grubbins," said the landlady, going behind her counter with a bustling air of self-confidence, "luck is like a pendulum as sways first to the right and then to the left, and so on backwards and forwards. And if I have one lodger as can't pay all at once, poor gentleman, I have another as pays like a princess! You see the Lord hasn't forgot me and my thirteen orphans. So, if you please, Mr. Grubbins, write me a receipt for a half year's rent; for I mean to pay you all, and get out of *your* debt, though I mayn't have five shillings left."

Mr. Grubbins stared in astonishment, and then, with but little abatement of his severity, wrote out the receipt, while Mrs. Corder laid two five-pound notes and five sovereigns in gold down upon the counter.

"Be more punctual for the future, and don't let one quarter run into another, and then, maybe, you'll keep out of trouble," said Mr. Grubbins, for he did not believe in the continuous prosperity of a poor widow with thirteen children, even with Providence to remember her and them.

And so Mr. Grubbins relieved the little shop of his oppressive presence.

Meantime, up-stairs, Eudora, under the spell of a strange fascination, pored over the *Times'* account of the tragedy at Allworth Abbey. There she saw her own blameless name held up to public scorn and execration.

When she had finished reading, she let the paper drop listlessly from her hands, while she herself fell again into that stupor of despair which threatened to undermine her reason.

In this miserable torpor she sat motionless, until the

entrance of the landlady to lay the cloth for her solitary dinner.

The good woman was, as usual, full of kindness, solicitude, and gossip, but all this availed nothing in arousing the wretched girl from her apathy. Even the dinner, when prepared, remained untasted, nor could the landlady prevail upon her stricken lodger to approach the table.

"Oh, this will never do in the world! The girl will kill herself," thought good Mrs. Corder, as at length she carried away the untouched spring chicken and green peas. "I'll just wait till tea-time, and then if a cup of good strong green tea don't rouse her out of this, I know what I'll do. I'll just make free to call in the medical man from over the way to look at her. I'm not a-going to let such a profitable lodger as *she* is die for want of seeing after, *I* know."

And accordingly, an hour after the failure of the dinner, Mrs. Corder brought up Eudora's tea, with some delicate cream toast and delicious guava jelly, all of which she arranged in the most tempting manner upon the table. She then besought her young lodger to partake of it, hinting at the same time that unless the latter would listen to reason in a matter in which her own health was concerned, it would really be necessary to call in the medical man over the way to see her.

The threat of a visit from the doctor had more effect than all the other arguments by Mrs. Corder. Eudora suffered herself to be seated at the table, and drank off the cup of tea that the careful hostess put into her hand.

And such was the beneficial effect of that blessed gift to woman, "the cup that cheers, and not inebriates," that Eudora, notwithstanding all her wrongs, griefs and terrors, felt her vital spirits returning, and with them her natural relish for food. And to Mrs. Corder's great joy she ate a round of toast and a spoonful of jelly.

"Now, there's for you! now then you'll do. See what it is to take advice. If you had had your own way, you'd

a'starved yourself nearly to death, and been ill. And now, if you'll take more advice, you'll go right to bed and to sleep," said the delighted woman as she cleared away the table.

Eudora followed her counsel, and retired almost immediately to bed, where as soon as her light was put out, and her head was dropped upon her pillow, a feeling of drowsiness stole over her brain, and she slept and forgot her sorrows.

Late that evening—after Mrs. Corder had given her children their supper, and sent them to their beds up in the attic, and had closed up her shop for the night—she came up-stairs and paused for a moment on the first landing to listen at Eudora's chamber door. Hearing her breathe deeply, like one soundly sleeping, the landlady nodded and smiled confidentially to herself, murmuring:

"Ah, ha! she is sleeping like a baby, the poor, dear, motherless child!—sleeping like an innocent infant baby without a trouble in the world, thanks be to the laudamy drops as I put into her tea-cup, and to Him as made the poppy grow for the sake of sorrowful mortals; for if it hadn't a' been for that, sure she'd a' gone mad to-night instead o' going peaceably to sleep. Well, laudamy is a blessing for which we should be thankful, as well I know as I would a' gone crazy the night Corder died if so be the medical man hadn't a given me laudamy drops!"

So saying, and being perfectly satisfied with the result of her own medical experience, good Mrs. Corder glided noiselessly up the second pair of stairs, and paused again upon the second landing.

Seeing a light shine through a half-open door, she, without the ceremony of knocking, entered a fireless and cheerless bed-chamber, where a young girl of about fifteen years of age sat reading by the light of a farthing candle.

Mrs. Corder sat her own candle down upon the chest of drawers, and dropped into a chair to recover her breath,

while she gazed with interest and curiosity upon the young girl who was so absorbed in the perusal of her book as not to notice the entrance of the landlady.

No one—not even the most careless observer—could have looked upon that girl with indifference. Her form was slight and fragile, and her face pale and thin from that unmistakable emaciation which attends a slow starvation—a slow starvation that saps life as surely as a slow poison. Yet, withal, the character of her face was full of spirit, courage, and even mischief. Her bright brown hair rippled back from a full round, white forehead, and flowed down her shoulders in wavelets that were golden in the light and bronze in the shade. Her eyebrows, of a darker hue, were depressed towards the root of her nose, and elevated towards the temples, giving a peculiarly arch expression to her large, clear, gray eyes, that, fringed with their long, thick lashes, might otherwise have seemed too thoughtful and melancholy for one so young. Her slightly turned-up nose, and short upper lip and rounded chin, were also full of that expression of archness which seemed the natural characteristic of her face. For the rest, she wore a faded light gray dress, without any addition except a white linen collar.

When Mrs. Corder had watched her for about a minute, she called her attention by saying:

"Miss Annella!"

The young girl started, and looked up, and with a laugh exclaimed,

"Oh, Mrs. Corder, is that you? How you startled me! bringing me so suddenly down from dream-land to sober earth. I feel as if I had fallen from a balloon, and struck the ground in a very damp, cold marsh."

"Miss Annella, dear, I just dropped in to say if so be you are a-waiting up for the captain, you may as well go to bed, because, if he comes home to-night—which is very uncertain, you know—I can just let him in myself."

"Thank you, dear, kind Mrs. Corder; you are really too good for this wicked world! But you are tired with this day's work, and you need your full night's rest to prepare you for to-morrow's; therefore, you see you must go to bed and go to sleep. As for me, I have got an interesting book here, and I could not leave it until I get to the end of it if it were to save my life! So sitting up will be no act of self-denial on my part."

"La, now! what sort of a book is it as can keep a young gal out of her bed at this time o'night?" inquired the landlady, with interest.

"It is the history of a brave boy, that took his father's crime upon his own childish shoulders, and ran away to draw off the chase from his father's house, and threw himself upon the world to seek his fortune! Yes, and he will find it too; or, at least, I shall not lay the book down until he does.'

"Lawk! I wonder if it is true?"

"To be sure it is true; every word of it is true. It is too good not to be true!" replied the girl, enthusiastically

"Well, I declare!"

"Oh, how I wish I was a boy!"

"Lawk, Miss Annella?"

"Yes, I do! Oh, don't I wish I was a boy! If I were, oh, wouldn't I go and seek my fortune, too!"

"Lawk-a-daisy me, Miss Annella, whatever do you mean?" inquired the astounded landlady.

"I mean just what I say!" exclaimed the girl, throwing down her book, and laughing gaily. "I mean that I would like to be as free as I should be if I were a boy, or rather if I were a man. I would like to go where I please, to do as I wish; to struggle with the goddess Fortune until I had made the capricious vixen my slave!" concluded the girl; and it was strange to see the fire that gleamed from her dark-gray eyes, and glowed upon her wan cheeks, as she spoke.

"La, bless my soul," thought the terrified landlady, "what a misfortin it is for young creatures to lose their mothers, for sure, never was a woman so beset with two such luny gals as I am by these two motherless young things. The one down-stairs is a-going melancholy mad, and the one up here is gone merry mad." Then aloud she asked:

"Miss Annella, do you remember your mother?"

"My poor, dear mother!" said the girl, in a tone of deep pathos, and with a total change of expression and manner. "No, I am very sorry that I cannot remember her. How should I, when she died while I was yet in the cradle—died broken-hearted, it is said, because my grandfather would never forgive her for having married my father."

"Well, that was hard, too; for though it's undutiful for a child to marry against the wishes of her parents, and never turns out to no good—as you may see yourself—still it is unnatural for a parent to hold out forever agin a child. So she died, poor woman, while you were a baby!"

"She died in the second year of her marriage, when I was but a few months old."

"Ah, then, that accounts for all your oddities, poor child. I daresay, now, you never even had a female aunt to look after you?"

"Not since I can recollect. I never had one but my father. We used to live about in barracks, wherever his regiment might be quartered for the time, until the evil days came, and poor father was cashiered—"

"Umph, ah! for drink, I suppose," thought the landlady; but she said nothing, and Annella continued:

"Since that time we have lived about in London lodgings, but never in any lodgings, Mrs. Corder, where I have been so happy as I have been here with you," said the poor girl, with grateful tears swimming in her eyes.

"Hum! I can easily comprehend *that;* I've never pressed the captain for his rent, which I don't suppose his other landladies has been so forbearing," thought the good woman; but instead of expressing such a thought, she said, kindly:

"Well, child, having so many fatherless children of my own, it came natural to me to try to make a motherless girl comfortable; for, as I often says to myself, suppose my children had been motherless, for though it is bad enough to be fatherless, it is ten thousand times worse to be motherless, as every orphan child knows. So now, my dear, I think, as you are determined to finish your book before you go to bed, the sooner I go and leave you to do it the better. And so good-night, my dear."

"Good-night, dear, good Mrs. Corder," replied the young girl, warmly pressing the kind hand that was extended to her.

And the worthy landlady took up her candle and went up a third flight of stairs to the attic, where she slept with her numerous progeny in quarters nearly as close as those of the fabulous "old woman that lived in a shoe, and had so many children she didn't know what to do."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

"Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me since every noise appalls me?"

THE sleep of Eudora was deep, long and refreshing. It was late in the morning when she was awakened by the sound of an unusual commotion in the house.

She started up in affright and listened, for in her present distressing position every new event seemed charged with deadly danger to herself.

As, with breathless lungs and beating heart she listened, she heard the sound of several heavy footsteps coming slowly up the stairs, and frequently pausing, as if to rest a burden. She heard them stop on the first landing outside her door, and then proceed heavily up the second flight of stairs. Then she heard them enter the room over her head, and deposit their burden so heavily that its slow fall shook the ceiling. This was followed by the shriek of a girl, that rang piercing through the house, and then dead silence.

Unable longer to endure the agony of suspense, Eudora rang her bell violently.

The summons was immediately answered by the landlady, who hastily entered the room.

Finding Eudora pale, faint and trembling, in a state of deadly terror, she came to her side instantly, saying:

"There, I knew they would frighten you in your nervous state, though I cautioned them to be quiet, too."

"What is it?" gasped Eudora.

"La, dear, the men a-bringing home the captain in a dead stupor from the public, where he has been a-drinkin' all night."

"The captain?" echoed Eudora, still in a state of bewilderment.

"Yes, dear, Captain Wilder, as I told you about him and daughter last night. They've just brought him home stupid with drink, and the poor girl thought he was dead, and screamed out, that was all; but I told her as he'd come to after a bit, and made 'em lay him on the bed, so don't you alarm yourself about it, my dear."

Eudora sank back upon her pillow, half ashamed of the relief she felt in knowing that the present shock of sorrow had come to another instead of to herself.

Mrs. Corder brought her hot water, and then Eudora arose and dressed, and passed into her sitting-room, where a comfortable breakfast was soon prepared.

Eudora was not so completely absorbed in her own great sorrow as not to feel some sympathy with the poor girl up-stairs. And she requested Mrs. Corder to supply Miss Wilder with anything that might be necessary, and charge it to herself, Eudora.

As the landlady had said, the captain came out of his stupor, but it was only to fall into frightful convulsions of *mania-á-potu*.

Many times during the day the kind-hearted landlady was obliged to run up-stairs to render assistance to his unfortunate daughter, whose youth, sex, and inexperience alike rendered her unfit and incompetent to manage a man in the frenzy of that terrible malady.

All the afternoon and evening Eudora was appalled by the dreadful groans, shrieks, and struggles of the demoniac, as he might truly be called, who was possessed by the demon of intoxication.

Late at night those violent demonstrations of frenzy ceased. And Eudora hoped, for the sake of his hapless daughter, that his madness was over for the present.

*It was over for ever.*

Eudora was just preparing to go to rest, when her door was abruptly thrown open, and the landlady, in great excitement, entered the room, saying:

"Oh, Miss Miller, my dear, for the love of Heaven, go up-stairs and stay with that poor girl, while I run for the doctor. I do believe the captain is dying!"

Eudora, deeply shocked at what she heard, and sensible withal that she could do but little good in such a case, could not, however, disregard such an appeal. She arose at once to comply.

"It is the back room up-stairs, immediately over your

own, my dear; you'll be sure to find it," said Mrs. Corder, hurrying away.

Eudora immediately went up-stairs and rapped at the door of the apartment to which she had been directed. But receiving no answer, she gently pushed the door open and entered the room.

It was a poorly-furnished chamber, lighted by a single tallow candle, that stood upon a stand on the left side of an uncurtained bedstead, and cast its sickly beams upon the haggard face of the dying man, whose form lay extended upon the mattress, and covered with a white counterpane.

On the right side of the bed knelt his daughter, with her hands clasping his hands, and her eyes gazing fondly and anxiously into the face of her father. So completely absorbed was she in her attention to him, that the entrance of the visitor remained unnoticed.

"Father," she said, continuing to gaze imploringly into his insensible countenance, "father, don't you know me—won't you speak to me? Father, it is your own Nella!"

She waited, without removing her eyes from those of the dying man, but receiving no answering word nor even a conscious look in reply to her impassioned appeal, she dropped her face upon the counterpane, and sobbed aloud.

At this moment Eudora glided to her side, laid her hand softly upon her shoulder, and spoke gently to her, saying:

"Do not weep so bitterly, Miss Wilder. There may be hope yet."

The child sprang lightly to her feet, threw back the golden-brown tresses that half veiled her face, and fixed her long-lashed, soft-gray eyes upon the beautiful vision that had entered the room, like an angel, to breathe of hope.

"I am your fellow-lodger, Miss Wilder, and having some experience in illness, I have come to render you what assistance I may," pursued Eudora.

"Oh, thank you! thank you a thousand times for coming!

But do you think you can do anything for him! Oh, see! he takes no notice even of a stranger coming into the room! he does not even know *me!*" exclaimed Annella, taking her visitor by the hand, and drawing her closely to the bedside, while she pointed to the suffering man, over whose face the gray shadows of death were already creeping.

Eudora saw that this case was not only beyond her skill, but beyond that of the most skilful physician. Yet she could not find it in her heart to communicate this grievous truth to the child whose soft, dark eyes were fixed so beseechingly upon her face.

"Have you any stimulant in the house—any hartshorn, or even eau-de-cologne?"

It was almost mockery to ask for any article of comfort in a place where the common necessaries of life seemed wanting. And so Eudora felt it to be when poor Annella shook her head, and then burst into tears.

"Do not weep, dear; the doctor will be here in a moment, and he will send the proper remedies immediately," said Eudora, who had taken up and was briskly rubbing the icy hand of the sufferer.

Annella followed her example with the other hand, which she chafed with the hot tears that fell fast from her eyes.

The moment after footsteps were heard upon the stairs, and the landlady and the doctor entered.

The latter immediately stepped to the side of the bed, from which Eudora and Annella retired to give him place.

The doctor took up the hand that Eudora had relinquished, and held it for about a minute with his finger on the pulse. Then he softly laid it down again, and stood with his eyes fixed in grave contemplation upon the stiffening face before him. The landlady drew near in awe.

"Remove his unhappy daughter from the room. The man has ceased to suffer," said the doctor, in a low tone, yet not so low but that its import struck the heart of Annella, who rushed to the bedside, gazed wildly upon the fixed features

of her father, and then seizing the doctor's hand, exclaimed:

"Dead? Do you mean dead? Oh, no, sir! no, sir! say he is not dead.

"Poor child! my saying that will not bring him to life. He has ceased to suffer! and we must all bow to the will of Heaven!"

With a low, inarticulate, sobbing moan, like the last utterance of a breaking heart, the poor girl sank upon the bed beside her father's body, and buried her face on his cold bosom.

There was no violent demonstration of sorrow. After that first broken-hearted sob and moan she lay as patient, as silent, and as motionless as the dead beside her.

They let her remain for a little time, during which they stood in reverent silence around the bed of death; and then the doctor said:

"She must be removed. She will make no resistance; she is too much prostrated to do so."

And Mrs. Corder went and tenderly raised the light form in her own strong, motherly arms, murmuring:

"La! she has no more solidness in her nor a poor little starved sparrow in the hard frost."

"Bring her into my room, and lay her upon my bed, dear Mrs. Corder, and then, while you attend to the dead, I will do all I can for the living," said Eudora, gravely leading the way from the chamber of death.

Mrs. Corder followed with her light burden, carrying it, as she had been desired, to Eudora's room, deposited it carefully upon her bed, and then withdrew to render the necessary services elsewhere.

Eudora, drawn completely out of herself, forgot for the moment her own sorrows in ministering to those of the poor, bereaved destitute Annella. Much acquaintance with grief had taught Eudora the rarest of all arts—that of wisely comforting the afflicted. She knew that sorrow is less

hurtful when it is permitted to express itself in complaints. She tempted Annella to complain, and the child said:

"Oh, Miss Miller, it is so—*so* hard! I hadn't a friend in the world but him—and he hadn't one on earth but me! We were all in all to each other! and so we always have been, ever since I can remember! When the court-martial took his commission away from him, he gathered me to his heart, and said—'Thank God they can never take *you* from me, my Nella!' And now he is taken from me!"

Here a burst of tears interrupted her speech. When it was over she resumed her complaint:

"They speak ill of him because he drank, Miss Miller; but he could not help it. How hard he tried to break himself of that fatal habit no one knows so well as myself—except his Maker! but he never could! Drinking was as much a disease with him as coughing is with the consumptive, or shaking is with the paralytic. Oh, Miss Miller, you look so good! *you* don't think hard of my poor dead father do you?"

"No, dear; I have always believed inebriation—habitual inebriation—to be a mere disease," said Eudora, sympathetically,

"Oh, it is! it is just as much a disease as dyspepsia or consumption is! This disease that he could not conquer—the dishonor that he felt to the inmost core of his heart—the despair that he should ever recover all that he had lost—these broke his heart! I know it; and I will defend his memory if no one else does!"

Here another burst of weeping arrested her farther discourse. When this second gust of sorrow was past, she continued her touching apology for the dead:

"If man could see as God sees—what it was that first drove him to drink—I mean what it was that first brought on this disease, they would pity instead of condemning him! It was my mother's early death! He loved her so much, Miss Miller. Since she died he has never looked

upon another woman with affection. And he loved me so much for her sake! And now he is gone, and I shall never see him more—never! never! never!"

Here, for the third time, a wild gush of tears and sobs choked her voice; but as it gradually subsided to quiet weeping, she grew still, and dropped into slumber.

She was but a child in her first sorrow, and like a child she had cried herself to sleep.

Eudora then quietly undressed, and lay down by her side, where she soon shared the same blessing of oblivion and repose.

The next day was one of great bustle in the house.

The parish officers, summoned by the troubled landlady, were early on the premises to take cognizance of the deceased and his necessities.

It was to be a parish funeral; there was absolutely no help for it. Mrs. Corder, after having paid her half year's rent, had not five shillings left in the world; and as for credit—who in this world would credit a poor widow with thirteen children, even for a grave in a Christian churchyard!

Eudora was equally destitute of money and credit. Mr. Montrose, in remembering everything else, had forgotten to supply her with funds. And thus the heiress of Allworth Abbey had not so much as a crown left in her purse. A fugitive and a stranger, she dared not ask for credit, even if there had been a chance of her obtaining it.

Thus it happened that the father of Annella was obliged to be buried at the expense of the parish.

In such burials there is no reverent delay, no long lying out; no funeral feast; no train of mourners; all is plain, cheap, and expeditious. The coffin was sent in the same morning, and the interment was ordered for the afternoon.

Annella heard of this arrangement with a stony resignation.

"He will not feel it," she said; "and as for me it does not matter."

When the hasty parish funeral was over, there was a talk among the parish officers of sending the young girl for the present to the union, until some other disposition could be made of her, and this was opposed by Mrs. Corder with all her heart and soul.

"Sure, sirs," she said, "I would no more consent to her going to the union, nor I would one o' my own. Sirs, I've thirteen a'ready, and I don't mind making 'em fourteen; certain, one more or less can't make no noticeable difference in a family like mine, unless it should be one less instead o' one more, which the Lord in his mercy forbid!" added the mother, fervently.

"Thirteen children! Do you tell me to my face that you have thirteen children, woman? What do you mean by having thirteen children in an over-populated parish like this? I should think a visitation of the scarlet-fever would be a godsend to you," said one of the officers, staring in astonishment.

"Now, may the Lord forgive you for that speech, sir! And as for the rest, sir, if ever I bring my children on the parish, it will be time enough for you to reproach me for first bringing 'em into the world. And more be token, instead of wanting to put a child on the parish, I am offering for to take one offen it," said the widow, in honest indignation.

"And that's true, too," observed the other officer, "but then you have enough to support now; you will never be able to bear the burdens of an additional one."

"Lord, sir, it will be but the putting of a ha'-penny more on every measure of peas, or potatoes, and persuading the people that they are better nor usual," added Mrs. Corder, *sotto voce*.

"Humph, humph, well, we will leave the child with you to-night, and think about it. Perhaps the parish may give

you something for keeping her, until she recovers herself, and is strong enough to be bound out."

"Sirs, I thank you; but I would no more take parish help for her nor I would for one of my own, as I told your worships before."

"Well, well, my good woman, there will be time enough to think of that," said the senior officer, as himself and his companion took their leave.

This conversation had taken place in the little back parlor behind the shop.

But there had been one unseen, silent, but attentive listener to this discourse. And that listener was Annella, who, crouching in her grief in a dark corner of the room, had been a witness to the whole interview. And while Mrs. Corder was attending the parish officers to the shop-door, Annella slipped through the side-door opening from the little back parlor into the hall, and crept away to the privacy of her own room, there to mature her plans for the future.

An hour afterwards Mrs. Corder carried her up a cup of tea and a round of toast, and setting these refreshments down upon a little stand, she dropped into the nearest chair to recover her breath, and said:

"Now, for the future, my dear, you will come down and take your meals with me. I have adopted you, and so you are to be my daughter, unless some of your kinsfolk should come forward and take you away from me; which I hope they won't, unless they can do much better for you than I can."

Annella spoke no word of thanks, but arose and knelt down by the side of the good mother, and raised her fat hand to her pale lips, and kissed it fervently.

"There, child, there; do get up and drink your tea, I aint a image to be knelt down afore, nor likewise a sovring Queen to have my hand kissed. But if you are fond of old women, and do want to be petted, why here,

then," said the affectionate creature, raising the girl, and drawing her slight form to her own motherly bosom.

"There, now drink your tea while it is hot, and then go right to bed, and get a good night's rest. And mind to-morrow morning come down and take your breakfast with me at eight o'clock," said the good woman, releasing the orphan.

And then, as Mrs. Corder was much too busy to indulge in sentiment, she arose and bade Annella good-night, and left her to repose.

"And now I'll just look in and see how my other girl does. I might as well own up to having fifteen children at once, for this beautiful creature needs a mother's care as much as any of the others," said Mrs. Corder to herself, as on her way down stairs she paused before Eudora's door and rapped.

Being requested to enter, she put her head in at the door, saying:

"I just looked in upon you to see if you required anything, and to say that you needn't trouble your tender heart any longer about Miss Nella. She's having her tea, and is going to bed presently. She'll do very well for the present. I have adopted her."

"You should really be at the head of an orphan asylum, Mrs. Corder," said Eudora, looking up from her book.

"I think I am at the head of an orphan asylum with fifteen orphans to look after," said Mrs. Corder, smiling at her own notion.

Then ascertaining that Eudora required nothing more that evening, she wished her good-night, and withdrew into the lower regions to attend to her own more rightful orphans.

Early the next morning the worthy landlady was stirring. She opened her little shop betimes, placing the red-haired heir of the house of Corder behind the counter to serve the early customers, while she busied herself in the kitchen

behind the little back parlor, preparing breakfast for her family.

Eight o'clock arrived, and the morning meal was ready; but Annella had not made her appearance.

"She is over-sleeping herself, poor child; so much the better, it will do her a world of good; and I can just keep some coffee and muffins for her against she does wake; so now, children, come, get your breakfasts."

And so saying, as in that busy household there was no time to wait, the good woman gathered her numerous progeny around the long kitchen table.

When their healthful appetites were well satisfied, the careful mother bustled up, and leaving her eldest daughter, Sally, a good-humored, red-haired lass of sixteen years of age, to clear away the table, she hurried off, up-stairs, to wait upon her lodger.

And it was while Eudora was seated before a delicate morning repast of black tea, buttered toast, and soft-boiled fresh eggs, that the latter inquired:

"How is Annella this morning?"

"I have not seen her yet. She is oversleeping herself, poor child, after all this fatigue and distress, and I hope she will feel the better of it," said the worthy woman.

"And yet it is ten o'clock. She may be ill, Mrs. Corder. And you know there is no bell in her room."

"That is true, Miss Miller; I will run up and see."

And so saying, the landlady left the room and went up stairs.

Eudora heard her footsteps overhead passing about from one room to the other, apparently in great excitement.

Then there was silence for a little while.

And then the lady was heard rushing down the stairs.

She threw open the door of Eudora's room and entered in a state of extreme agitation, holding an open letter in her hand, and exclaiming:

"She is gone, Miss Miller!"

"Gone—*who*?" inquired the bewildered Eudora.

"Nella! Nella! Who else?"

"Nella! But *where* is she gone! Sit down and take breath, Mrs. Corder."

The landlady dropped panting into the nearest chair.

"Now, tell me quietly all about it, Mrs. Corder."

"She's gone! She's off! that's all about it."

"'Gone,' 'off,' you said that before; but *why* has she gone?"

"'Cause she's crazy; 'cause she's frightened o' the parish officers, blame 'em, and o' the union, and 'o being bound out, or else o' being a burden to me!"

"But *where*, then, has she gone!"

"To her ruin, I'm afeard! To seek her fortin', she says."

"But in what direction?"

"Lord knows! *I* don't, if *she* does herself. This comes all along o' having no home and no mother, and being brought up in a barrack, with no one but a tipsy father to look after her. Here, Miss Miller; here's her letter. I haven't more than just looked over it. And to go off without her breakfast, too, before any of us was up! But here's her letter, Miss Miller; it is intended for you as well as for me, for see it is directed—'*To my good friends!*' Read it out loud, please, and then, maybe, I may understand it better, for I never was a good hand at making out writing."

Eudora took the letter, and read:

DEAR, KIND FRIENDS:—When these lines shall meet your eyes, the poor girl that you have befriended will be far away from London. But do not think that she is ungrateful because she is forced to leave you; forced to leave you for your own sakes as well as for her own. She cannot consent to become a pauper, to be disposed of by the parish officers in any manner which they may think proper.

And she cannot remain a burthen upon good Mrs. Corder, or dear Miss Miller. She longs for freedom and independence, and pines for the country and the open air. She has not a relation in the world upon whom she has any claim. But that you may not be uneasy about her, know that she is gone to seek her fortune in the north of England. There she has a possible friend in the daughter of her mother's nurse, the foster-sister of her mother, Tabitha Tabs, who lives as ladies'-maid at a place called Allworth Abbey, somewhere in the county of C———. For her mother's sake, this Tabitha may help her to some good place in the country, where she will be willing to work very hard, so that she can only see the green fields, breathe the fresh air, and feel herself a free girl. And so, dear friends, pray feel no anxiety for her welfare. But believe, that He who fed the young ravens will care for her, who will always remember your kindness with the warmest gratitude while her name is

"ANNELLA."

When Eudora, in reading this letter, met the name of Allworth Abbey, a deadly terror came over her. She felt all the extreme danger that threatened herself in the journey of this unsuspicious girl. She could scarcely command herself sufficiently to read the letter to its close. And when she had finished the perusal, the paper fluttered and dropped from her hand, and she sank back half-fainting in her chair.

The landlady perceived her emotion, but ascribed it wholly to sympathy with the misguided fugitive. She picked up the letter, and smoothing it out, began to look at it again, saying:

"Did ever any human creature hear of such a mad act? For to go and leave well-known friends to seek her fortin' among total strangers; and without any north star to steer by, as one may say, but a ladies'-maid somewhere in the

North of England. Stay. Where did she say the maid was at service?"

"At a place called Allworth Abbey," faltered Eudora, with as indifferent an air as she could assume.

"Allworth Abbey? Allworth Abbey? Sure I have heard that name somewhere lately, and heard no good of it neither," said the landlady meditatively.

Then with a sudden flash of memory lighting up her face, she exclaimed:

"Why, it's the very place where that wicked young girl poisoned all her relations! Lawk! to think that she should be going there! But she couldn't ha' read the *Times*, or heard o' what's happened in that family, or she never would be going there."

"There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow and a fore-ordained fate in the journey of a wild girl to Allworth Abbey," sighed Eudora.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE STUBBORN WITNESS.

"If a woman will, she will, you may depend on't:
And if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't."

We must return to the scene of the tragedy, and relate what took place at Allworth Abbey immediately after the escape of Eudora.

In the first place, as soon as Eudora had taken leave, and before she had passed through the secret egress, Tabitha shut her eyes, and turned her back so that she might not actually *see* by what means, or in whose company, her mistress quitted the chamber.

But as soon as she heard the panel slipped into its

place, and the bolt on the other side shot across it, she turned, and with a smile of triumph, sank into the easy-chair, saying:

"Now they may cross-examine me until all is blue, if they like, and I can swear a hole through an iron pot that I never saw how she left the room."

And so saying, Miss Tabs yielded herself up to the repose of which she stood so much in need.

It was late in the morning when she was awakened by a loud knocking at the door.

She started up, recollected in an instant where she was, who rapped, and what was required.

She jumped up, rubbed her eyes, shook herself, and went to the door.

"Well, what do you want?" she inquired, as she opened it a little way.

"We want the prisoner. Here's some breakfast for her. Let her eat it quickly, for the chaise is at the door to convey her to the county gaol," said the policeman on duty, handing in a waiter of coffee and bread.

"The prisoner? What prisoner are you talking about? There is no prisoner here!" said Tabitha, disdainfully, as she received the waiter, and set it upon the side-table.

"Miss Eudora Leaton, your missus, our prisoner. Tell her to get herself ready quickly, as we must take her off towards the prison directly," said the policeman.

"My missus! Why, haven't you taken her off already?" exclaimed Tabitha, in well-assumed surprise

"Taken her off already? No! What do you mean?" inquired the policeman, in astonishment.

"I mean as how she isn't here! as you know very well she isn't, 'cause you've taken her away! What have you done with her—eh?" cried Tabitha.

"Come, woman, none of your nonsense; it won't do with us, I can tell you; so just get your missus ready to go with us."

"And I tell you she ain't *here!* and you know it a great deal better than I do! 'cause you *must* have taken her away! You kept the door!"

"Not here!" exclaimed the policeman, passing without ceremony into the room, and proceeding to search it.

"Now it is of no use to try to gammon people in this way, by pretending to search the room where you know very well that she cannot be found," said Tabitha, scornfully.

"Where is she?" thundered the policeman.

"That's what *you'll* have to tell! *You* kept the door! I suppose you came in while I was asleep and stole her away! Mayhap you've murdered her and thrown her into the lake for aught that I know! Oh! you shall pay for it!" cried Tabitha, working herself up into a well-acted passion.

The policeman, without paying further heed to her words, immediately gave the alarm; and the chamber was soon filled with an eager and curious crowd.

"Now, then! what is all this about?" inquired the doctor, who was present.

"Why, sir, this girl declares that the prisoner has escaped!" said the policeman.

"I don't declare no such thing! I declares that when I woke up this morning she was gone; and it stands to reason, as that perlice guarded the door, he must have stolen her away while I was asleep," cried Tabitha, in an angry voice.

"Escaped? how? when? where? Look to all the outer doors and windows. Search the house! Search the grounds! Give the alarm in the neighborhood! Fifty pounds to any of you who will bring her back! Disperse! quick! she destroyed all your master's family!" exclaimed the doctor, vehemently, addressing the assembled servants, who hurried away to obey him.

"How came you to be so, so negligent, officer, as to let

your prisoner pass you?" inquired Squire Humphreys, one of the magistrates, who had remained in the house all night, because he was a friend and neighbor of the late Lord Leaton.

"As Heaven hears me, your worship, she never got out through this door! I never left my post for a single minute during the night, but stood leaning up against the door itself; so that even if I had dropped asleep, and the door could have been opened, I should have fallen down and been roused by the fall. But I never closed my eyes during the whole night, your worship," said the policeman.

"This is most wonderful," continued the magistrate, who, with the doctor, made a careful examination of the room, including the fastenings of the window-shutters, which were all found secure.

"Has any one questioned my comrade, your worship?" inquired the policeman, respectfully.

"Sure enough no one has done so," said the doctor, going and knocking at the door of the little dressing-room.

The officer on guard there unlocked the door, and stood face to face with the doctor.

"Your prisoner has escaped! How came you to be so careless as to let her pass?" demanded the doctor.

"Pass! On my honor, sir, no one has passed me the whole night. I have stood with my back leaning against the door and the key in my pocket all the time," said the officer, in astonishment.

"This is most inexplicable! Did neither of you hear any noise in the night?" inquired the magistrate.

"None whatever, your worship," said the first officer.

"Everything was as silent as death, sir," added the second.

"This is most incredible! The girl seems to have been a sorceress as well as a poisoner, and to have vanished up the chimney in a flame of fire!" exclaimed the doctor, in an angry dismay.

"I beg your worship's pardon," said the principal policeman, coming up and touching his forehead to the magistrate.

"Well, Sims, what is it?"

"I think, sir, as the prisoner could not have escaped through either of the doors guarded by me or my comrade, that she must have got out in some other manner, and that this young woman, who stayed with her all night must know all about it; and with submission to your worship, I think she ought to be made to tell."

"Oh! *ought* I? I'd like to see who'll make *me* tell anything I don't want to tell!" exclaimed Miss Tabs, thrown as completely off her guard as any passionate person may be if one can only succeed in making them angry.

"I agree with you," said the doctor, to the policeman. Then turning to Tabitha, he said: "Young woman, you have betrayed yourself. You evidently know something of this mysterious escape of the prisoner. And we must insist upon your divulging all that you do know."

"Werry well, insist away; I aint no manner of objection to your insisting as much as ever you please," replied Tabitha, folding her arms, setting her teeth, and grinning defiance at the doctor.

"How did the prisoner escape from the room?" demanded the latter.

"I don't know," replied Tabitha.

"You *do* know, and I will make you tell," vociferated the doctor.

"Werry well then, make me," sneered Miss Tabs.

"How did the prisoner escape, I ask you?"

"And I tell you I don't know."

"Young woman, I am that sure you *do* know, and you shall be forced to tell."

"Listen to me then; I will tell you what I *do* know, and I won't tell you anything more."

"That is all we wish to hear. Go on."

"Well then, I fell asleep in that chair, and when I woke up my missus was gone. That's what I *know*. And it stands to reason as that perlice, as kept the passage door, must have come in while I was asleep and stole her off."

"Young woman, are you telling the truth?"

"Yes, sir; 'pon my word and honor."

"The *whole* truth?"

"Lawk, sir, I don't *know* the whole truth no more nor Pontius Pilate."

"Girl! you know more than you choose to tell; but I will find a way to make you open your mouth," said the doctor, sternly.

"And I won't open my mouth no wider for nobody on earth, nor for nothing that can be done to me! I'll be burked, and made a subject of, and 'natomized in a dissecting-room afore I'll open my mouth any wider for anybody on earth! So there now!"

"Young woman, it is my duty to inform you that if you know anything of the escape of the prisoner, you can be made to divulge it," said the magistrate.

"I don't know nothing at all about it, and I won't divulge anything about it," said Miss Tabs, rather inconsistently. "I won't! to save anybody's life! And I'd like to see who'll make me speak when I don't want to speak! I'd like to see the Church and the State try to do it! or the army and navy try to do it! or the House of Commons and the House of Lords try! or the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor try! or all of them together try to make me speak when I don't want to speak!"

"Or hold your tongue when you don't want to hold it, you impudent creature!" exclaimed the doctor, in a rage.

"Well, I s'pose people can be imperent if they choose to take the consequences, can't they? And here am I, ready to take the consequences. I s'pose you'll do something dreadful to me! well, do it; here I am, ready to be

made a wictim of, or a martyr of, or a 'natomy of! But I won't speak! I won't speak! I won't! to please anybody."

"You are speaking all the time, you wretch! You are deafening us with your speech, if you would only speak to the purpose," said the doctor.

"Your words, young woman, betray that you do know more of this matter than you are willing to divulge," said the magistrate, gravely.

"I have told you what I do know, sir; that when I closed my eyes my mistress was still in the room, and when I woke up she was gone."

"But have you no knowledge or suspicion of how she went?"

"I have no certain knowledge, sir, as I did not see her when she left. But as there seems no other way of her getting out of the room, it stands to reason that that policeman as kept the passage-door must have let her out."

The magistrate and the doctor looked at each other in perplexity. They had full faith in the policeman; they had no faith whatever in Tabitha, and yet the evidence was certainly against the policeman, and in favor of Tabitha. She saw this, and followed up her advantage by saying, valiantly:

"There, gentlemen, I have told you the truth. I can't tell you any more than that. Now you may do your worst to me, for here I stand ready to be a martyr to the truth."

The doctor and the magistrate still continued to look into each other's faces for counsel.

"Why don't you make the policeman confess? Don't you see that there was no other way for Miss Leaton to escape but through the door that he guarded, for the dressing-room guarded by the other policeman has no outlet, and the window-shutters were all barred and padlocked

by the doctor, who took away the keys with him. And even if he had not done so, the windows are full sixty feet from the ground, and even if she had attempted to jump from either of them, she must have broken her neck. But she could not even have attempted it, since the windows were found as they were left, securely fastened. And therefore, your worship, is it not perfectly clear as my mistress must have left the room through the door guarded by that perlice?" concluded Tabitha, pointing vindictively at the innocent but discomfitted officer.

"Sims, this looks very badly for you," said the magistrate.

"I know it do, your worship, but I hope my character is above suspicion."

"I believe it to be, Sims, and I do not myself suspect you."

In fact, both the magistrate and the doctor strongly suspected Tabitha, but as the evidence was certainly not against her, they could do nothing in the premises.

They left the chamber, and went down into the crimson drawing-room, which had been the scene of so many of the investigations, to consult with the others upon the best means of searching for and recapturing the fugitive.

They remained long in consultation before it occurred to them to summon one who might be supposed to take the deepest interest in the matter. Then Mr. Humphreys said:

"Had not Mr. Montrose better be requested to give us his company and counsel in this affair?"

"Certainly," replied Doctor Watkins, ringing the bell.

"Give my respects to Mr. Montrose, and say that we should be pleased to see him here," said the doctor to the footman who answered the bell.

The servant withdrew, but presently returned with the news.

"Mr. Montrose has not yet risen, sir."

"Lazy fellow, and it is nearly twelve o'clock," said the

doctor, dismissing that matter from his mind, and resuming the business with the magistrates.

The form of a placard was drawn up, offering a reward for the apprehension of Eudora Leaton, and this was ordered to be immediately printed and posted all over the country. The police were sent out in every direction to prosecute the search; and when these measures for the apprehension of the fugitive had been taken, the doctor ordered in breakfast, and sat down with the magistrate and solicitor to partake of it. And while they were thus engaged, Malcolm Montrose, who had returned home unobserved, quietly entered the dining room, and bade them good morning.

"Oh, you are up at last!" said the doctor.

"I had a very bad night's rest; that must be my apology for a very late appearance," said Malcolm, drawing his chair to the table.

"And have you heard since you came down that the prisoner has escaped?"

"Yes, so my servant informed me; but she cannot have gone far."

"Why, no; and as the promptest measures have been taken for her apprehension, we hope soon to have her safely lodged in jail. But the great mystery is the manner of her escape. She must have vanished up the chimney. I suspect Tabs of knowing more about it than she is willing to tell; but then there is no evidence against her, and she insists that her mistress must have been spirited away by the policeman on guard while she, Tabs, slept. And in fact if we were not assured of the fidelity of Sims, this would seem the most likely solution of the mystery.''

"I should think it would seem the only one," said Malcolm, secretly thanking Heaven that Tabitha had proved "game," and that the manner of Eudora's escape was as yet unknown and unsuspected.

The remainder of the day was passed in fruitless search

for the fugitive, of whom several traces were supposed to have been found. One policeman brought back the report that a young lady in deep mourning had taken the night train at Poolville for Edinburgh. Another that a young person answering to the description of Eudora Leaton had been seen to get into the cross-country stage-coach going to Sherbourne. A third brought the intelligence that a young woman in black had been seen to go on board a vessel bound for Abbeyport—a small sea-coast village six miles from Allworth—to Arrach, on the north coast of Ireland.

Policemen, armed with warrants, were sent off in all these directions, while the route of the fugitive remained undiscovered.

Late that night Lieutenant Norham Montrose, the younger brother of Malcolm, arrived at the Abbey.

Norham Montrose was, in form and features, the very counterpart of Malcolm, having the same tall, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, strong limbed athletic form, the same noble Roman features, and the same commanding presence. But in complexion and in temperament they were as opposite as day and night; for whereas Malcolm was fair as a Saxon, with clear, blue eyes, and light auburn hair, Norham was dark as a Spaniard, with jet-black eyes and raven-black hair and whiskers. And where Malcolm was gracious, liberal and confiding, Norham was haughty, reserved and suspicious.

He had not visited the Abbey since the arrival of Eudora from India, and consequently he had never seen her. The letter from the family solicitor that summoned him to the house informed him of all that had taken place. And now he came with his dark blood boiling, and his heart burning in hatred and vengeance against her whom he considered the fell destroyer of the doomed Leaton family.

Malcolm received him with grave affection, and they talked over the late tragedy in very much the same strain in which Malcolm had already discussed the circumstances with

others—Malcolm insisting upon the innocence of Eudora, and Norham, like former opponents, appealing to the overwhelming evidence against her.

The next day had been appointed for the double funeral.

At an early hour of the morning the guests began to assemble to pay due respect to the memory of the deceased.

Among the neighboring gentry who had been invited to assist at the solemnities, were the respective families of the Honorable Mrs. Elverton, of Edenlawn, and the veteran Admiral Sir Ira Brunton, of the Anchorage.

These, as the nearest neighbors and dearest friends of the deceased, arrived first upon the premises.

The admiral came alone in a mourning coach, and was received by Mr. Montrose and Lieutenant Montrose.

Mrs. Elverton came, accompanied by her daughter Alma, and was received by the Princess Pezzilini in the deepest mourning.

It was high noon when, in all the "pomp, pride and circumstance" of death, the remains of Lady Leaton and her daughter Agatha were consigned to the family vault under the chapel, where three months before those of the head of the House had been laid. They were placed, the wife on the right and the daughter on the left of the late Lord Leaton. And it was with feelings deeper than awe that the mourners left the chapel where rested the bodies of the last of that once flourishing but now extinguished race.

After the funeral obsequies were over, it was arranged that the brothers Malcolm and Norham Montrose, as next of kin and heirs presumptive, should remain for the present in charge of Allworth Abbey.

But as it was known that the Princess Pezzilini, still a young and beautiful woman, could not continue as the guest of two gentlemen in a house where there was no other lady, she was immediately overwhelmed with invitations. All the country gentry contended for the honor of the company of an exiled princess. But the beautiful

Italian decided to accept for the present the hospitality of the veteran hero, Admiral Sir Ira Brunton.

And the same evening, attended by Miss Tabs, whom she had taken into her service, the princess accompanied the gallant admiral to his elegant retreat, the Anchorage.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE YOUNG WANDERER.

"Either they fear their fate too much,
Or their desert is small,
Who put it not unto the touch,
And lose or win it all."

THE interests of our history require that we take up the fortunes of the captain's orphan daughter from the moment that she was left alone on the evening preceding her flight.

Poor Annella had not been brought up as other young girls, and therefore should not be judged by the same standard.

The only and motherless child of a dissipated officer in a marching regiment, nearly the whole of her neglected childhood had been passed in the camp, in the barracks, and in perpetual change of place.

And in this roving and unguarded life she had contracted a reckless spirit of independence, a proud impatience of restraint, and a wild love of freedom, which might lead her into the gravest errors, precipitate her into the deepest misfortunes, and require the severest discipline of Providence to correct,

Hitherto her short life, though erratic, had been blameless.

Now deprived by death of her father, her only natural guardian, and the only authority she would recognize, her high spirit revolted at the thought of control by any other power. And above all, the idea of a degrading parochial interference in her personal matters was most abhorrent to her proud heart.

Thus, the strongest motives that could actuate a creature of her peculiar character prompted her to immediate flight —on the one hand, a loathing dread of the degradation of being sent to the union, or bound to a mistress, or left a burden upon the poor widow; and on the other hand, a longing desire for liberty, fresh air, and country scenery; and under all this a latent love of adventure, a romantic disposition, and a long-cherished secret resolution to make her own way in the world, combined an irresistible power to urge Annella to this strange proceeding.

From the hour of overhearing the conversation between the parish officers and the landlady, she had firmly determined upon making her escape into the country.

To hint such a purpose to Mrs. Corder she knew would be to raise instant and fatal opposition to her plans; and once resolved to escape, she was desirous that her departure should be without hindrance or pursuit. Therefore her withdrawal must be private as well as prompt.

But to leave the house without taking leave of her kind friends would seem ungrateful, and to leave them in anxiety concerning her fate would be cruel.

Therefore, after some consideration, she resolved upon the expedient of writing a farewell letter. When she had finished, folded, and directed this letter, she pinned it in front of the frame of her dressing-glass, in a conspicuous place, where she knew it must be found.

Next she made a large compact bundle of all the most valuable portions of her personal effects; then she put up a small parcel containing only a single change of clothing. And then she looked into her purse, that contained just

half-a-crown, which had been slipped into her hand by Eudora, and accepted as a loan, to be repaid at some future day.

Lastly, she lay down upon the bed to rest while waiting for the dawn of day to commence her journey. She did not expect or even wish to sleep; yet scarcely had her head sunk upon her pillow, when her fatigue overcame her excitement and cast her into a deep sleep that lasted until morning.

Day was dawning when she awoke with a start and a sudden recollection of her purpose.

She sprang up from the bed, and commenced cautious but hasty preparations for her flight.

When quite ready, she took her bundles in her arms and silently descended the stairs until she reached the narrow entrance-hall. She softly glided along this hall until she reached the front door. She unlocked this door, passed through it, closed it behind her, and went forth alone into the world.

The street was at this hour more deserted, still, and silent than at any other time of the day or night. The latest wayfarers had long since retired, and the earliest were not yet astir. The rows of houses on each side the street presented long, dark lines of unbroken gloom and quietness.

For a moment Annella stood before the door she was about to leave, and looked up and down the street in perplexity where first to direct her steps.

Then she turned up the street, and walked on briskly in the direction of the city.

It was growing quite light, so that by the time she reached London Bridge the sun was rising and throwing a flood of golden glory over the waters of the river.

She crossed the bridge and hurried onward up King William street until she reached the shop of a Jew dealer in second-hand clothing.

She entered this shop, untied her large bundle, displayed its contents upon the counter, and inquired of the Jewess in attendance:

"What will you give me for these?"

"How mush do you wantsh?" asked the woman.

"I think they are worth three pounds, but you may have them for two," replied Annella, hesitatingly.

"Two poundsh!! You are jokinsh," said the Jewess turning the half-worn dresses over in disdain.

"What will you give me for them, then?" inquired Annella, impatiently.

"Five shillingsh for the lotsh."

"That will not do," said Annella, beginning to tie up her bundle.

"Stopsh, stopsh, letsh talk a little more," said the woman, detaining her customer.

Annella paused, and a little more bargaining ensued, in which, as a matter of course, Annella was cheated. Impatient to be off, she closed the sale, disposing of her wardrobe for the sum of ten shillings, and left the house.

Keeping nearly due north, she walked on until in due course of time she reached the King's cross Railway station.

It was now nine o'clock.

She entered the ticket-office, and inquired when the next train would start. She was told at ten minutes past the hour. This gave her just time enough to get a cup of coffee and a bun at the pastrycook's stall opposite the office.

When she had partaken of this refreshment that her long walk had made so necessary, she went up to the third-class ticket-window, laid her half sovereign upon the ledge, and enquired of the clerk:

"How far on this line will this money take me?"

Instead of answering her question the clerk regarded her with such a look of suspicion, that she hastened to say:

"I have just lost my father, and have no relations here in London. I wish to go to the north, where I have a friend. I have only twelve shillings and six pence, and I wish to save half-a-crown to buy food, and to go as far as half-a-sovereign will carry me on my way; after that I must walk."

There were other passengers thronging to the window to be accommodated, and so the clerk hastily drew in the half-sovereign and pushed out a ticket, which she seized as she left the window, and joined the crowd that was hurrying towards the third-class carriages. She had just taken her seat when the train started.

It was the first train, and thus it happened that at the very moment in which good Mrs. Corder discovered the absence of her favorite, Annella was full forty miles from London, flying northward at the rate of forty miles an hour.

As the train rushed onward the wild girl's spirits rose.

It was a beautiful day in spring; the earth wore its tenderest and freshest green; the sky its softest and clearest blue; and the sun shone out like the smile of God over all nature.

Annella was alone in the world; she had just buried her father, and had not a reliable friend left upon earth; she had but one change of clothing in her parcel, and one-half crown in her purse; she knew not exactly where she was going; where she should eat her next meal, or take her next night's rest.

And yet, in a state of poverty, friendlessness, and uncertainty that must have crushed the spirit of any grown-up man or woman subjected to the trial, this child could not feel sorrowful, anxious, or foreboding.

The sun was bright, the country fresh, and the motion rapid; and between the beauty of the day, the swiftness of the journey, and the shifting of the scenery, her spirits were so exhilarated that she could have sung for joy. It was rapture to watch the woods and fields, farms and ham-

lets, hills and valleys reel past her as the train flew onward. It was delight to stop at the strange towns, with strange streets and houses, and strange people coming and going. And it was ecstasy to rush onward again with lightning speed. And intoxication to feel that she was free!

She might be the most miserable little creature alive, but she did not know it. She might come to beggary the next day, but she did not think it. She might be rushing straight to ruin, but she did not feel it. Thus, despite of frowning Fate, the spirit in her bosom clapped its wings and crowed for joy.

And by this the reader may jump to the conclusion that Annella's brain was slightly "touched;" that she was a little "luny;" that she had not her "right change." Nothing of the sort, dear reader. Annella was simply undisciplined, inexperienced, and eccentric. Her ignorance was "bliss." And so, though poor and friendless, she set forth to seek her fortune with as brave a spirit as ever inspired Richard Cœur-de-Lion, Lady Hester Stanhope, or any other knight or dame of ancient or of modern times when sallying forth in quest of adventures.

The day wore on. The afternoon was so much more sultry than the season warranted, that the weather-wise farmers in the carriage with Annella predicted the approach of one of the heaviest storms that ever shook heaven and earth. And, as if in justification of this prediction, towards evening the clouds began to gather thick, black, and lowering over the earth. The face of the country also changed. The lovely woods, fertile fields, and fruitful farms were all left far behind, and the barren heaths of the north lay all around.

And still the train rushed onward in the face of the approaching tempest. And still with undaunted spirit, Annella sped on towards her unknown fate.

One after another of her fellow-passengers left the carriage in which she travelled, until at last, at a small road-

side station, Annella found herself quite alone. And at this station the guard put his head in at the door with the peremptory demand:

"TICKETS!"

Annella started from her day-dream, and nervously produced hers.

"You've travelled thirty miles farther than you've any right to do with this ticket, and I've a great mind to give you in charge," said the guard, angrily.

"Have I? Indeed I did not mean to do it. I quite forgot to look at my ticket," said Annella, beginning to tremble in a manner most unworthy of damsel-errant seeking her fortune.

"You knew where you were going to, I suppose," growled the guard.

"Indeed I didn't; I only wanted to go as far by rail as this ticket would take me."

"And that was to Howth, and you've left Howth twenty miles behind you."

"My gracious!" was the dismayed exclamation of poor Nella.

"Come! that won't do, you know; you've got to get out, and I shall give you in charge of a policeman. I see one coming now."

"Don't! pray don't! See, I've two shillings left, that ought to be enough to pay for a twenty-miles' ride in a third-class carriage," said Annella, springing out, and thrusting her last money into the hand of the guard.

That exemplary officer pocketed the fee, and ran forward to open the door of a first-class carriage to admit a gentleman and lady who were waiting for seats.

The train moved on, leaving Annella standing alone by the roadside with her little bundle in her hand, but without a penny in her purse. Around her, in all directions, lay the barren and rolling heaths. Above her lowered the dark and threatening clouds. Night, storm, and darkness were

approaching, and she was houseless, friendless, and penniless on the heath. She looked around her on all sides for shelter from the gathering tempest, but she could not see a sign of human habitation. Even the little wayside station, so busy a moment before, seemed now shut up and deserted.

In fact, the business of seeking her fortune did not seem half so pleasant as it had appeared in the morning, and she fairly wished herself home in good Mrs. Corder's third-floor back; but only for a moment, and then her spirits rallied, and she walked on, saying to herself:

"Come, Nella, we mustn't be dismayed by the first difficulty, let us go on; we are in a Christian country, any how, and by-and-by we must come to some cottage, where the people will give us shelter from the storm to-night, and to-morrow will be a new day."

And so, with a smile in the face of frowning Fortune, she struck into a road that crossed the rail way track and hurried onward.

She knew not where she was bound. She knew not where in all the north Allworth Abbey, the goal of her desires, might be situated. She knew not even whether she might be within five or ten miles of the place. In setting out to seek it she had taken the general northern route as far as the train would carry her for her money, trusting to the chapter of accidents to find the rest of her way to her destination

"It must be within a circuit of twenty miles, I should think; and somebody about here must know something about it. So to-night I must seek shelter from the storm, and to-morrow inquire my way to the Abbey," she thought, as she trudged onward through the gathering darkness.

Low mutterings of thunder and large drops of rain warned her to hurry her steps. She ran on, looking eagerly to the right and left to spy out some wayside cottage in which she might find refuge from the impending storm. But the dark-

ness was now so thick that she could scarcely see her own road.

Suddenly the clouds were cleft asunder by a stroke of forked lightning, that blazed from horizon to horizon, making the night for one instant as bright as noonday. This was immediately followed by a reverberating crash of thunder and a heavy fall of rain.

Annella stood still, but not appalled; for in that one instantaneous glare of light she had seen on a rising ground far to the westward the white chimneys of a mansion-house. And though the whole scene was again swallowed up in darkness, she kept the direction of the house in her "mind's eye," and bent her steps towards it, trusting in the frequent flashes of lightning to correct her mistakes and guide her on her way.

Her way lay up and down hill through this dreadful night of storm, of blinding lightning, of deafening thunder, and of drowning rain. Confused by the warring elements, saturated with wet, and exhausted by fatigue, Annella yet held on her way towards the mansion upon which she had fixed as her house of refuge.

As she approached the neighborhood of this dwelling she grew independent of the lightning as a guide, for in the darkness between the flashes she could see the windows of the mansion, which seemed to be illuminated from within as for a festival.

And from the moment that she found she could keep the house constantly in view, she toiled on towards it hopefully, saying to herself:

"It may be a gentleman's house or a lord's house, but it must be a civilized Christian's house, and therefore it must afford me shelter from the storm for this one night."

So, though nearly blinded, deafened, and drowned by the lightning, thunder, and rain, Annella valiantly pushed on towards the goal.

But ah! that place of refuge was much farther off than

she had supposed it to be. A brilliant light set upon a hill is seen for a long way off in a dark night; and long after Annella had first caught sight of the illuminated windows, she continued to toil on through night and storm and darkness, through thunder, lightning, and rain, up and down hill, over the rough road, without seeming to get much nearer the desired haven.

Even the storm grew weary of raging and growled itself to rest. The lightning ceased to flash, the thunder to roll, and the rain to fall; the clouds dispersed, the stars came out, and the moon arose; and Annella, hungry, wet, and weary, still pushed on up hill and down hill towards the illuminated house, which, at last, she was certainly drawing near.

At length she began to ascend a hill on which the mansion stood, blazing like a beacon-light at sea When she reached the summit of the hill she found herself arrested by the low brick wall that seemed to enclose the home-park attached to the house. Taking this wall for her guide, she followed it, hoping that it would bring her at last to the gate or the gamekeeper's lodge. Keeping close to the wall, and walking rapidly, she came indeed to the gate, which stood wide open and unguarded, as the lodge beside it was untenanted.

She passed through the gate and entered a long semi-circular avenue of elms, that in the course of fifteen minutes' rapid walk brought her up in front of a magnificent house, the whole square front of which was illuminated from top to bottom.

And yet there was not a living creature to be seen!

Annella paused in awe, and gazed upon the brilliant and imposing front, muttering to herself:

"There must be a party here to-night. And yet there cannot be, either, for I see no servants, no carriages, and no crowd. And though everything is as bright as heaven, it

is also as silent as the grave! What in the world can be the meaning of it all?"

Without daring to go up and knock at the principal door, Annella turned and went around to seek admittance at some humbler back entrance, thinking, with a shudder:

"I shall be torn to pieces by the dogs, I suppose."

But no dogs barked, and Annella made her way unharmed to the back part of the house.

Here the windows were likewise all illuminated, and some of them were so near the ground that Annella was tempted to look in upon the inmates before knocking for admittance.

So she climbed upon an outside cellar-door, and holding by the window-sill above it, looked through the window in upon the room.

It was a cosy sitting-room, warmly lighted, well carpeted, and well curtained, though now the curtains were drawn back, letting the cheerful light stream out into the cheerless night. There was a table in the centre of the room covered with a most comfortable and substantial supper.

Within her view sat two persons—a tall, lean, gray-haired old man, and a short, fat, fair-haired old woman.

They looked so happy that Annella could not choose but hold on to the window-sill and gaze upon their happiness, until the woman, raising her eyes to the window, started, uttered a shriek, and dropped her knife and fork.

And at the same instant Annella sank down out of sight upon the cellar-door.

But soon she heard a commotion in the room over her head, followed by the opening of a door to the left, and the crashing of a footstep through the shrubbery. And the next instant she felt herself rudely siezed, and set upon her feet, while a rough hand turned the light of a dark lantern full upon her face, and a harsh voice demanded:

"Ship ahoy! Who are you?"

"Annella Wilder!" gasped the captured girl, as she recognized the tall, lean, gray-haired old man whom she had watched at his supper.

"From what port?" asked the questioner.

"I don't know, sir," answered Annella, in perplexity.

"Where bound?"

"I do not understand you, sir."

"Who's your skipper?"

"Indeed I cannot tell you, sir."

"Come along in then to the admiral! We'll see if we can't make you show your colors. We can't have any piratical-looking crafts cruising about in our seas without overhauling their letters of marque! so I'll just take you in tow and tug you into port, alongside of the admiral," said the oddity, keeping a firm hold of his prize, and forcing her on through the back entrance into the house.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ANCHORAGE.

Some, indeed, have said that creeping,
Lightly to the casement leaping,
Silly through the window peeping,
They a ghostly maid have seen.
To the oaken sill she clingeth,
And her wanlike hands she wringeth,
Then in garments white she wingeth
O'er the grassy plain so green.—*E. P. Lee.*

About three miles west of Allworth Abbey, upon a commanding hight near the sea-coast stood the Anchorage, the seat of Admiral Sir Ira Brunton. The park extended to the sea, and its western wall rose directly from the edge of the cliff, which formed a natural boundary to this extensive domain.

Immediately under this cliff nestled the little fishing village of Abbeyport, with its single street of cottages facing the sea, its small fleet of fishing-smacks drawn up to the shore, and its one humble tavern, called the Flag-ship, kept by Mr. Tom Tows, a retired boatswain, and patronized liberally by the kitchen cabinet of Admiral Sir Ira Brunton.

The Anchorage, was a large, square, gray edifice, three stories high, with two great halls crossing each other at right angles, and dividing each floor into four separate suites of apartments.

The numerous windows of the mansion commanded from all points the most magnificent prospect perhaps to be found in the three kingdoms.

The front windows facing the west looked over the grand slope of hills towards the edge of the cliff, and down upon the picturesque village at its foot and out upon the boundless ocean.

The back, or east windows, looked inland down into the deep valley and thick woods in which was hidden the old Abbey and the dark pool which lay before it.

The north windows looked out upon a rolling country of sterile heaths, dotted here and there with an oasis in the form of a farm or a hamlet.

And lastly, the south windows looked down over a smiling landscape of wooded hills surrounding a green valley, in the midst of which lay a lovely lake, upon whose farthest bank stood the elegant villa of Edenlawn, the seat of the Honorable Mrs. Elverton.

Admiral Sir Ira Brunton, the proprietor of the Anchorage, was originally a man of the people. By talent, courage, and good fortune, he had risen from the humblest post in the navy to his present high position.

He shared, however, that too common weakness of self-made men — an exaggerated respect for hereditary rank.

At the mature age of forty, when he had attained the

rank of post-captain, and was flushed with his recent success, he attempted to marry into the peerage by proposing for the hand of the titled but dowerless daughter of an earl.

But failing in this enterprise, he wedded the only child and heiress of a wealthy city banker, who brought him as her portion a half million of pounds sterling, the beauty of a Venus, and the temper of a Xantippe.

With a part of the money he bought the magnificent estate of the Anchorage, and with the lady he lived a tempestuous life of twelve years, at the end of which she stormed herself to death, leaving him as a legacy one fair daughter, ten years of age, named after her mother, Anna Eleanora.

Admiral Sir Ira — then Captain Brunton — did not again venture on the dangerous sea of matrimony, but brought home his widowed mother to take charge of the young lady, and engaged a French governess to superintend her education. But a simple-minded, old-fashioned dame, and an unprincipled French adventuress, were not exactly the best guides for a self-willed girl.

And so it happened that when Miss Anna Eleanora was about sixteen years of age, while her father was at sea, and herself with her grandmother and governess at Brighton, she accidentally formed the acquaintance of a young lieutenant of Hussars, whose regiment was stationed at the neighboring barracks. With the connivance of the French governess, who was heavily feed for the purpose, the young officer frequently met the little heiress, with whom he finally eloped to Gretna Green, where they were married.

If, instead of that romantic love which had misled both the young creatures, fortune had been the object of the lieutenant, he must have been wofully disappointed, for when the captain returned from the coast of Africa, and heard of the runaway marriage, he discarded his daughter

and son-in-law, and forbade the names of either ever to be mentioned in his presence.

As the commands of Captain Brunton were as absolute as the laws of the Medes and Persians, the name of his only child and her young husband dropped from conversation and from memory, and thus their offence, and even their very existence, became an old and forgotten story.

The captain rose from post to post in the navy, until, finally, at the advanced age of seventy-five, he retired from active service with the well-earned rank of an admiral and the well-merited title of a baronet.

His household at this late period of his life was a very remarkable illustration of family longevity.

It consisted of his grandmother, a hale old dame of one hundred and eight years; his mother, a healthy old woman of ninety-two; himself, a hearty veteran of seventy-five; and his grand-nephew and adopted heir, Midshipman Valerius Brightwell, a young gentleman of nineteen.

The antique grandmother of this strong family was commonly called "old mistress," "the old madam," or "old Mrs. Stilton." The ancient mother was termed "young mistress," "the young madam," or "young Mrs. Brunton." The veteran admiral was denominated by his venerable ancestresses "that thoughtless boy," and by the household, "the young master." And the midshipman was called by the old ladies, "the dear baby," by the admiral, "the lad," and by the servants, "little Master Vally."

At the venerable age of seventy-five, with an emaciated form, a withered face, and a grey head, the veteran did not even suspect that he was growing old, far less know that he was really an aged man, who had already exceeded the average duration of a human life.

The truth was that the existence and the vigorous health of the two ancient ladies, his mother and his grandmother, kept the admiral in his prime. How could any man feel

old, while his mother and his grandmother still lived in a green old age—and while they still thought of him and spoke of him as a gay young man, who had not yet sowed all his wild oats, but who required the constant supervision and guidance of his elders to keep him out of temptation and danger?

And thus, while the whole family honestly united in keeping up this delusion, could the admiral be blamed for sharing it?

Among the domestic servants of the Anchorage two deserve mention—Mr. Jessup, late of Her Majesty's Service, now in that of Admiral Sir Ira Brunton, to whom he filled the relation of confidential attendant, and Mistress Barbara Broadsides, the housekeeper.

Jessup was tall, thin, pale-faced, and grey-haired in person; and narrow, prejudiced and authoritative in mind.

Mrs. Broadsides was short, fat, rosy, and fair-haired in person; and liberal, merciful, and yielding in disposition. As might be expected, there was a strong attraction of antagonism between these two opposite natures that led to a matrimonial engagement that was to be consummated after the death of the admiral and his mother and grandmother; but as the sibyls and their descendant had fallen into "a confirmed malady of living on for ever," Jessup and Mrs. Broadsides were growing old as betrothed lovers.

Such, with the necessary number of men and maid servants, was the household of Admiral Sir Ira Brunton at the time he invited the Italian princess to honor his mansion with her presence.

The admiral had gallantly given up his coach for the accommodation of the princess and her attendant, while he himself escorted them on horseback.

It was a lovely summer afternoon, and when they emerged from the dark, wooded vale, and ascended the high grounds lying between it and the sea-coast, nothing could be more animated than the sudden change of scene

from deep shadow and circumscribed view to open sunshine and a boundless landscape. The princess and her attendant enjoyed it exceedingly, and despite all adverse circumstances, felt their spirits rise accordingly.

The admiral frequently rode up to the side of the carriage to point out some object of interest in the landscape, such as the bright little lake, Eden, lying like a clear mirror in the bosom of its green valley, and reflecting in its deep waters its lovely, embracing hills, and its crowning villa of Edenlawn.

And upon these occasions the admiral ever addressed his illustrious guest with the profoundest respect as "your highness," until at length the princess, with a sweet and mournful look and tone, said:

"Do not mock me with that title, best friend. I am a widow and a fugitive, dependent on your bounty for the roof that shelters my head and the bread that maintains my life. Do not mock me, therefore, with any titles of honor. I am poor Gentilescha Pezzilini; no more than that. I do not even permit my servants to address me by any other title than the simple one of madame, that a matron of any rank may bear."

"Madame, I am the humblest of your servants, and must obey you," said the admiral, bowing deeply as he fell behind the carriage.

"A deused fine woman! I'm glad that she is a widow, and a fugitive, and the rest of it. I wonder—humph—" thought the admiral, falling into a day-dream, in which the fair person of Madame Pezzilini formed the principal figure.

Clearly, "that thoughtless boy" was in danger of forming an indiscreet attachment!

While they passed slowly over the beautiful downs, the bright sky became gradually overcast, and low mutterings of thunder reverberated around the horizon.

Once more the admiral approached the carriage-window to say:

"We shall have a storm, madame. Shall I order your coachman to drive faster?"

"Certainly, Sir Ira. I only desired to be driven slowly that we might enjoy the lovely afternoon, but since it grows dark and stormy, let us get on by all means, especially as you are exposed to the weather. Had you not better get into the carriage, and let my servant Antonio take your horse?" inquired the princes.

"I thank you, madame; and should the storm really overtake us, I will gladly avail myself of your permission to do so; but I hope that we shall get under shelter before it breaks upon us," replied the admiral; and then calling to the coachman, "Drive like the deuse, Ned," he again fell behind.

The sky grew darker and darker, the thunder rolled louder and nearer, and though Ned really drove his horses as if the Evil One were in chase of him, he had only made the half circuit of the park wall, and turned into the circular avenue of elms leading to the house, before the black, overhanging canopy of clouds was suddenly broken by a blinding flash of lightning, followed by a stunning crash of thunder and falling deluge of rain.

The admiral spurred his steed, the coachman whipped his horses, and in two minutes they reached the house. The admiral sprang from his horse, assisted the princess to alight from the carriage, and led her into the house, just in time to escape another flash of lightning, peal of thunder, and whirl of rain.

They were met by the two old ladies, who had come out into the hall to do honor to their guest. They were two fine old dames, tall, thin, fair-faced, and grey-haired like their descendant, the admiral. They were both dressed similarly in black satin gowns with white muslin neckerchiefs, and white lace caps; and looked very much alike, except that the elder had more flesh and less hair than the

younger. They stood smiling and courtesying with pleasing, old-fashioned affability.

"Madame Pezzilini," said the admiral, with formal courtesy, "will your highness permit me to present to you my grandmother, Mrs. Stilton, and my mother, Mrs. Brunton, who both feel highly honored to receive you?"

"That we do," said the elder.

"Yes, I'm sure," added the other.

"Ladies, kind friends," said the Italian, "you see before you no princess, but a poor widow, a stranger and a fugitive, who seeks only a temporary asylum under your hospitable roof."

"You are kindly welcome, madame, either as one or the other," said Mrs. Stilton, heartily, offering her hand.

"Ah, that indeed you are!" chimed in Mrs. Brunton, extending hers.

The princess received and pressed those venerable hands, and was about to express her thanks, when a broad glare of lightning, accompanied by a deafening roll of thunder, and a shock of wind and rain that seemed to shake the house, made them spring apart. The effect of this burst of the tempest was felt with the more force from the fact that all the window shutters were still open.

"Good gracious, Iry!" said the oldest lady, as soon as she had recovered from the shock; "surely you'll have the shutters closed on such an awful night as this?"

"No, ma'am, not this night, of all nights in the year. The harder the storm the greater the need of a beacon-light to guide any wayfaring traveller to the house," said the admiral, decidedly.

Then turning to the princess, he added:

"Madame, I have a custom of which I hope you will not disapprove; it is to leave my window-shutters open every night up to the latest hour of retiring, so that the lights may shine far out over the downs, to guide any weary and benighted traveller to one house, at least, where he is sure

to find welcome and succor. And especially on tempestuous nights, I light up the whole house from top to bottom, to invite any poor, storm-beaten wayfarer to its shelter. I hope you approve of the custom ?"

"I think it a grand and beautiful instance of benevolence !" said the princess, in a fervent tone.

"I am rewarded," replied the admiral, "that is, if I had deserved reward; but the fact is, that in doing this, I only pay a debt Providence having guided me through a very stormy existence into this safe port at last, the least I can do is to open the harbor freely to all other tempest-tost barques. That is the reason I call it the Anchorage; for any storm-driven craft is free to enter and drop anchor here."

"It is nobly said—" began the princess; but the words were interrupted by another burst of the tempest that rattled all the windows, and seemed to shake the firm building to its foundation.

"Iry, I must say that you are clean mad. Every pane of glass in the house will be shattered, and cost no end of money to replace, besides the inconvenience !" cried Mrs. Stilton, as soon as she could recover her breath after the last shaking.

"No danger, grandmother; these old windows have stood harder storms than this," replied the admiral, laughing.

Then turning to the princess, he said, in a low voice:

"Madame Pezzilini, my grandmother and mother are old-fashioned dames, and so I hope that you will make allowance for their ways."

The quick ears of the old lady caught this disparaging apology, and she was prompt to reply.

"Don't you mind that boy, madame; like all young people, he thinks himself wiser than his elders; but time will teach him better, and show him that old-fashioned ways are the best ways after all."

The princess opened her large blue eyes in astonishment

at hearing this grey-haired veteran spoken of as an inexperienced youth, but remembering that it was his grandmother who spoke thus, she merely bowed and smiled in reply—the bow and smile being, in this case, a non-committal answer.

"And now, my dear grandmother, old fashions and new fashions both agree in suggesting that Madame Pezzilini be shown to her apartment before tea," said the admiral.

"Certainly, certainly! I beg your pardon, madame, but the thunder and the lightning and the wind do so confuse my poor head. Oh!" she exclaimed, as another burst of the tempest shook the house.

When the deafening noise subsided, the old lady turned, and said:

"Come here, Broadsides, and show this lady and her maid to the suite of rooms on the second floor front, right side. And when you have made her comfortable, show her into the drawing-room to the tea-table—the Lord have mercy upon us!"

This latter exclamation was called forth by a terrible glare of lightning that filled the whole house like a conflagration, accompanied by a rolling, crashing, stunning peal of thunder, and a rushing shock of wind that seemed about to batter down the walls over their heads. It was some minutes before this furious blast subsided.

And then Mrs. Broadsides, who had been waiting behind her old mistress, came forward, courtesied, and led the way up the grand staircase to the splendid suite of apartments that had been fitted up for the reception of the illustrious Italian.

Jessup at the same moment advanced from some obscure retreat where he had been lurking, took possession of his master, and marshaled him off to his chamber to change his wet riding-coat for a dry-evening-dress.

And the two old ladies retreated to the drawing-room to await the return of the admiral and his guest.

When they were seated side by side in their comfortable arm-chairs on the right of the fire-place:

"What do you think of her, Abby, my dear?" said the antique lady to the ancient one.

"I think she is a very charming woman, and I pity her misfortunes."

"And so do I. But see here, Abby, my dear, you must really look after that boy of yours, or he will be making love to this Italian lady."

"Yes, mother; I see that."

"And you know, Abby, that you would not like the lad to marry a foreigner."

"No, mother."

"So, though we must be as kind as possible to this unfortunate princess, whose story reminds me of all the fairy tales I ever read in my life, *still* we must keep an eye on that boy, and see that he does not make a fool of himself, Abby."

"Certainly, mother—Lord bless our souls!" she broke off, as their conversation was again interrupted by another rapid onslaught of the tempest that cannonaded the walls as if it did not mean to leave one stone upon another.

The two old ladies sat crushed in a silence of deep awe for nearly an hour, until the furious storm had raged itself into a temporary rest. Then Mrs. Stilton spoke:

"I do not know how anybody can have the spirits to drink tea on such a night as this, but I suppose it will be wanted all the same; for Iry never turns aside from his way for any storm that ever falls, and as for the princess, she looks like just such another. So, Abby, child, you may ring for the tea."

Mrs. Brunton, who sat nearest the chimney-corner bell-pull, complied, and the tea-service was brought in and arranged upon the table

And soon after they were joined by the admiral, who, "despite the storm that howled along the sky," had made

a very careful evening toilet, and by his nephew, Midshipman Valerius Brightwell, a fine, tall, dark-haired young man, who, when not on active service, was at home at the Anchorage.

These had scarcely taken their seats when the door opened, and the Princess Pezzilini entered, her golden hair and fair face radiant in contrast to the rich black velvet dress that was her usual costume.

Way was immediately made for her, the young midshipman was presented in due form, and the whole party sat down to tea.

The storm had spent its fury, and now only revived at intervals in inoffensive blasts of wind, faint flashes of lightning, and low mutterings of thunder.

And the conversation at the tea-table became animated, even upon a gloomy subject.

They talked of the tragedy at Allworth Abbey, and of the flight of Eudora.

Opinion was divided upon the subject of the accused girl's guilt or innocence.

The two old ladies and the admiral agreed in pronouncing the evidence against her to be too convincing to admit a doubt upon the subject.

The young midshipman, who had seen Miss Leaton several times at church, and judging as a young man will by the face, declared his absolute faith in her innocence, in despite of all the testimony that might be brought against her.

The Princess Pezzilini held a neutral position between the controversialists, affirming that the whole affair seemed to her a horrible mystery, to which she could find no clue.

We will leave the drawing-room circle canvassing this question, and look into the housekeeper's room upon another party, with whom we have a little business.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN APPARITION.

Through the lighted window prying,
Softly on the bright pane sighing,
Then in sudden panic flying,
Through the untrodden gloom,
To the dark oak-tree she cometh,
Round its trunk she wildly roameth,
Shuddering as the dark stream foameth,
There she waits her coming doom.—*E. P. Lee.*

It was a medium-sized, comfortable apartment, well-carpeted, and well-curtained, with its back windows looking out upon the shrubberies in the rear of the mansion.

A well-spread supper-table stood in the middle of the floor, and around it were gathered Mrs. Broadsides, Mr. Jessup, Miss Tabs, and Mr. Antonio, who were the housekeeper's guests for the evening. Their conversation, like that of their superiors, had turned upon the late tragic events at Allworth.

Here, also, opinion was divided upon the subject of the supposed criminal—Mrs. Broadsides, Jessup, and Mr. Antonio loudly declaring their belief in the guilt of Eudora, and Miss Tabbs stoutly asserting her faith in her innocence.

But through the whole of this conversation, it was observed that at intervals Mrs. Broadsides, who sat at the head of the table opposite the window, would often start, stare and bless herself, while Jessup, who sat at the foot, would twist his head over his shoulder as though he saw a spectre behind him.

Politeness deterred Miss Tabs and Mr. Antonio from taking any notice of these strange manifestations.

At length Jessup, after giving his own neck a most dangerous wring, and getting no satisfaction for his pains, spoke out, saying:

"Mrs. Broadsides, I would be obliged to you, ma'am, if you would tell me what it is that you see out of that window, for shiver my timbers if I can see anything but black darkness."

"Jessup, don't ask me! that's a good soul! it's nothing earthly as I see," answered the woman, in a hushed tone of awe.

"What is it, then? I insist upon knowing."

"Don't, Jessup! it's nothing earthly, I tell you, and I don't like to speak of it. Lord bless my soul, there it is again!" exclaimed the woman, in a suppressed tone of horror.

"What? where? I see nothing!" said Mr. Jessup, wringing around his neck until his face was nearly between his shoulders.

"It's wanished!" whispered the housekeeper, without withdrawing her gaze from the window, while Mr. Antonio and Miss Tabs stared in amazement, and Mr. Jessup regarded her with incredulous indignation, saying at length:

"Can't you tell me what you saw, then, if you saw anything but of your own imagination?"

"'Twas no imagination of mine, Jerry Jessup; if you must and will know what I have seen, I'll tell. Since I have been sitting here at this table, I have seen a pale, ghostly female figure flit past that window three times!"

Every one glanced shudderingly at the window except Jessup, who contemptuously exclaimed:

"It was only your own fancy, Mrs. Broadsides!"

The housekeeper shook her head ominously.

"It's all along o' leaving the shutters open. It's awful ghostly to have the night peeping in at you through the glass. I always imagine that I see something at such time."

"Why don't you close the shutters?" suggested Miss Tabs.

"Because of a whim of master's to keep all the windows open till bed-time, most especially on stormy nights,

when they may serve for beacons to guide the belated traveler to the shelter of this roof. Lord bless the admiral and mend his ways, so kind to all the world, so cruel to his own dear darter," sighed Mrs. Broadsides.

"His daughter?" echoed Mr. Antonio.

"Yes, his darter, my young missus, as run off with a young lieutenant in a marching regiment, and married him all for love. She went 'long of him everywhere, and may have died of fever in the Crimea, or been massacred in India, for aught we've heard of her since her marriage; for it's as much as any one's life's worth to mention her name in master's presence."

"And is he so hard all these years that he won't make friends with her?"

"Make friends with her? You don't know him. He won't even hear her name," put in Jerry Jessup.

"Wish I was his wally-de-sham. I'd ding it into his ears morning, noon and night. I'd bring it up with his hot water and lay it down with his slippers, and put it on with his night-cap every day of his life," said Miss Tabs, valiantly.

"No you wouldn't, for the very first time you tried it, you'd get pitched out of the window or down the stairs, and have your neck broken. Heaven save me, there it is again!" cried the woman, breaking off in terror.

All looked towards the window. Jessup wrung his neck around nearly to the point of dislocation, exclaiming:

"Where now? I tell you there's nothing there. It's all your own nerves. Mrs. Broadsides, ma'am, you want a dose of assafiddity."

"It's gone again!" whispered the woman.

"It never was!" snapped Mr. Jessup, impatiently.

"Yes it was, And I know *what* it was. It was a Banshee come to warn me of my own death, or my master's, or my old missusses."

"Stuff and nonsense."

"It isn't stuff, and it isn't nonsense. It is a Banshee, if ever one appeared to mortal eyes!"

"Yes, *if* ever one appeared," sneered Mr. Jessup.

"But I have heard of the Banshee, myself," said Miss Tabs, coming to the assistance of the housekeeper.

"To be sure you have, my dear. Who in this country-side has not heard of the Banshee that appeared to the Honorable Mrs. Elverton, of Edenlawn? How Mr. Elverton was on the Continent, where he had been a many months, and Mrs. Elverton was at Edenlawn, sitting up late at night, reading in her dressing-room. The night was fine, and the curtains were undrawn, when all of a suddent she heard a low, moaning, unearthly voice outside of the window, and looking up, she saw a female figure, in flowing white raiment float past the window as if it were swimming in the air, and heard it wail forth the words—'*Hollis Elverton is no more!*' as it disappeared. Well, the lady got up and made a note of the day and the hour; and sure enough a fortnight after that, she heard of the death of her husband at St. Petersburg, and he died the very day and hour at which she had seen the Banshee! There! what do you make of *that?*" inquired the housekeeper, triumphantly.

"Why, as the Honorable Mrs. Elverton was just as hysterical as you be," said Mr. Jessup, doggedly.

"But then her husband actually died at St. Petersburg at the very day and hour that the Banshee appeared to her at Edenlawn. How do you account for that?"

"Just happened so, that's all."

"You're as unbelieving as Thomas—Oh, Lord have mercy upon us! Look there; there it is again! and no Banshee neither, but the spirit of my young mistress, with her very face and form, only looking as if she had risen from the grave. Look, look, oh!" cried the woman, covering her face with her hands, and shaking with terror.

Again all looked fearfully towards the window.

Jessup wrung his neck nearly in two in the effort to look

behind his back; and upon this occasion perseverance was rewarded. Pressed against the outside of the window, they all saw a fair, wan young face, that sank out of sight the instant it was detected.

"That's neither a Banshee nor a spirit; it's a mortal girl!" exclaimed Jessup, springing up, overturning his chair, and rushing out of the room.

The remainder of the party held their breaths in suspense until Jessup pushed open the door and reappeared, dragging after him the pale, weary, half-starved, dripping wet figure of a young girl, whom he pulled up before the astonished housekeeper, saying, mockingly:

"There—there's your Banshee! A girl as has been caught out in the storm, and was frightened at ringing the door-bell at such a great house as this."

"The very form, the very face! I never, no, I never *did* see such a likeness; the express image of my young missus, only thinner, and paler, and smaller. Come to the fire, my lass. What is your name, and how came you out in the storm? You are not one of the village girls?" inquired the housekeeper, drawing the chilled stranger to the bright little coal fire that the dampness of the evening made very comfortable even at this season.

Then seeing in the glare of the light that the girl was wet to the skin, she exclaimed:

"Oh, deary me; you haven't a dry thread on you! You must have been out in the whole storm; come into my chamber and get a suit of dry clothes on your back, and then you shall have some hot supper before you answer any of my questions."

And taking the young stranger by the hand, the good housekeeper conducted her into an adjoining room.

They were gone about fifteen minutes, at the end of which Mrs. Broadsides returned, leading her *protégée*, who was now comfortably clad in a black silk dress, that looked as if it had been made for her.

"Dear me, how well that fits," said Miss Tabs.

"Yes, it was my young missus's. She left most of her clothes here, poor child, when she went away, and I have taken care of them ever since. And now, if you want to know what my darling looked like, just look at this young gal; for there never was two peas so much alike as Miss Anna Eleanora, and this young gal, only that this one looks like the ghost of the other. And now, my child, sit down at the corner of the table here by the fire, and have some of this curried chicken, while we make you a glass of warm port-wine negus; and no one shall trouble you with any questions until you have done supper," said the good housekeeper, settling her *protégée* in the most comfortable seat.

Another fifteen minutes sufficed to satisfy the appetite of the stranger, who was thereupon required to gratify the curiosity of her entertainers.

"And now, my lass, tell us all about yourself. You are not of this country-side, I suppose?" said Mrs. Broadsides, when they had gathered around the fire.

"No, ma'am, I came from London this morning by rail as far as the station, and then set off to walk."

"But where were you going my child, when you were caught in the storm?"

"To Allworth Abbey, ma'am."

"To ALLWORTH ABBEY!" exclaimed Mrs. Broadsides and Miss Tabs in a breath.

"Yes," said the girl, looking up in surprise at the manner in which they had received her communication.

But this was no time to explain by introducing the tragedy of Allworth Abbey. The curious women were for once more eager to hear than tell news, and so Mrs Broadsides inquired:

"And whatever could have taken you to Allworth Abbey of all the places in the world, my poor dear?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you as you are so good to

me. I am an orphan; my mother died when I was an infant, and my poor father died a few days ago in his lodgings in London, leaving me quite distitute. So the parish officers talked of sending me to the union, or binding me apprentice to a mistress. I couldn't bear the thoughts of either, so I ran away, travelling by rail as long as my money lasted, and then setting out to walk."

"But why to Allworth Abbey?"

"Because my poor mother had a foster-sister living at service there, who, I thought, might be kind to me."

"What—what was her name?" inquired Miss Tabs.

"Tabitha Tabs. I remember it well."

"Why, that was *my* name; but my mother never had but one-nurse child, and that was Miss Anna Eleanor Brunton. Oh, my goodness, Mrs. Broadsides, can—can—can it be as this is her darter!" exclaimed Miss Tabs, breathlessly.

"What is your name, young girl?" exclaimed the housekeeper, in an agitated voice, grasping the arm and gazing eagerly into the face of the stranger.

"Annella Wilder—Oh–h! don't squeeze my arm so tightly; you'll break the bone!" said the girl, shrinking from such a very pressing proof of regard.

"Annella Wilder! Annella was the pet name we used to call my darling by, being the short for Anna-Eleanora; and Wilder was the name of the young fellow as bolted with her. And you as like her as one pea-pod is to another, and as sure as fate you are my poor darling's child. You are! you are! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! oh!" cried the housekeeper, catching the girl to her bosom, and sobbing and weeping over her.

"And so my darling is dead! Died when you were an infant you say! And her young husband, your father, did he ever forget her who gave up so much for his sake? Did he ever put another woman in her place?" cried the affectionate creature, still holding the girl to her bosom.

"Never; he devoted himself to her memory—he mourned her as long as he lived.

"Then how was it, my child, that you were left so destitute?"

"Oh, my father, was unfortunate—he was obliged to sell out—and—he became more and more unfortunate until he died—in destitution—and—do not ask me any more," said Annella, hesitatingly and bursting into tears.

"I understand; I understand; that word 'unfortunate' means a great deal, whether it is applied to man or woman. But there! don't cry any more, my dear. Better fortune is in store for you, I hope; for surely the admiral will never visit the offences of the parents upon the child. There, don't cry any more, you are all right now, you are here," said the woman, wiping the tears from Annella's eyes and re-seating her in her chair.

"But tell me who you are who take so kind an interest in my mother and myself, and what place this is where I feel so much at home?" said Annella.

"Who am I, and what place is this? Why, my dear, is it possible that you do not know where you are?"

"No more than the dead."

"Did ever any one hear the like! And how did it happen that you came here, then?"

"As I told you before, I was trying to find Allworth Abbey, when I was overtaken by the night and the storm, and while I was wandering about like a lost child, I saw the lights of this house shine from afar and they guided me to it."

"Well, Lord bless the admiral's lights, for they have done some good at last in guiding his own grand-daughter home!" said Mrs. Broadsides, fervently.

"Ma'am?" exclaimed Annella, opening her grey eyes in astonishment.

"Now, is it creditable that you don't yet know as you're

at the Anchorage, the seat of your grandfather, Admiral Sir Ira Brunton?"

"And is it possible that I am in the house of my grandfather—my stern and terrible grandfather, who hated and discarded my father and my mother?" exclaimed Annella, in dismay.

"Yes, my dear, but he will not hate them any longer; he must not hate the dead, you know; and he *must* love the living; and he shall acknowledge you as his granddaughter and sole heiress, and take you to his heart, or else turn me out of his house," said the woman, stoutly.

"And me, too; which I don't think he be likely to do for a trifling difference of opinion," said Mr. Jessup.

"And me!" said Miss Tabs, valiantly.

And so likewise said Mr. Antonio.

Annella remained in one maze of astonishment.

A question now arose as to whether it would be better to let the admiral know at once of the arrival of his granddaughter, or to defer the announcement until the morning.

Mrs. Broadsides, who, with all her assumed heroism, was really very timid, felt inclined to postpone the threatening hour as long as possible.

Miss Tabs agreed with her, especially as the admiral was now engaged with company.

But Mr. Jessup said the matter ought to be referred to Miss Annella herself, and he was supported in his opinion by Mr. Antonio. And the matter was referred accordingly.

"Since I am in my grandfather's house, of all others in the world, I am not going to stay one hour without his knowledge and consent," said Annella.

"And the girl is right," said Mr. Jessup, emphatically.

"Then I hope you'll go and denounce her yourself, Jerry Jessup, as you're so bold about it," exclaimed Mrs. Broadsides.

"And that I'll do this minute, too," said Jerry, rising.

"And mind, however master may receive the news, it

may be as well to let him know that out of this house she doesn't go this night without my going too!"

"Hush, hush, woman; don't cry out till you're hit. Wait till I come back," said Jerry, leaving the room.

The admiral was still in the drawing-room with his grandmother, his mother, the Princess Pezzilini, and the young midshipman. The whole party had finished tea, and were gathered near the fire, still engaged in discussing the tragedy at Allworth Abbey, when the door opened, and Mr. Jessup made his appearance.

"Well, Jerry?" inquired the admiral, looking up.

Mr. Jessup gave the naval salute to his superior officer, and answered:

"If you please, your honor, I spied a small craft to windward, making signals of distress."

"Well?"

"I put out after her, your honor, and found her beating about in the storm, though well nigh water-logged and ready to go down."

"And what then?"

"I overhauled her, your honor, took possession, and towed her into port."

"And what now?"

"Please, your honor, I have come to report and take orders about her."

"What sort of a craft is she?"

"Please, your honor, a small craft, tight-built, trim-rigged, fast sailing in favorable weather, I should think, though now rather the worse for the wear and tear of winds and waves."

"Well, haul her up along side, and let's have a look at her," commanded the admiral.

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Jerry, hastening to obey.

"Whatever does he mean? I never can understand that man, any more than if he spoke in Hebrew," said Mrs. Brunton.

"Hang the fellow! he always mistakes the drawing-room for the quarter-deck," said the admiral, laughing. "He means that a young person has been caught out by the storm, and driven in here for shelter."

"But you will never bring a stranger into this room, Iry?"

"Certainly, if Madame Pezzilini has no objection."

"Oh, certainly not," replied the princess, with a suave courtesy.

"Then we will see what she is like, and perhaps turn her over to the care of Mrs. Broadsides," concluded the veteran.

At this moment the door opened, and Jerry hove into sight, towing in his prize, which he announced as—

"The Annella Wilder, London, your honor."

The admiral did not hear the name distinctly, but fixed his eyes upon the young girl, who was steadily advancing towards him. And as she drew nearer, his eyes dilated in astonishment, until, when she stood before him, he gazed upon her in a panic of consternation, for it seemed to him that his long-lost daughter was in his presence.

For a minute that seemed an age, the old man and little maiden regarded each other in silence, while all the other members of the party looked on in surprise, and then the admiral broke forth:

"Anna; my Lord, is it possible? I heard that you were dead long ago, child—you and your infant daughter together. Where do you come from? You look, indeed, as if it were from the grave! Why do you come here now? Is it to reproach me?"

"Grandfather," said the young girl, sadly but fearlessly, "the Anna whom you invoke is not here to offend you with her presence. She could not come if she would, she would not, perhaps, if she could; fifteen years ago she went with her broken heart to heaven. And I, her daughter, standing here before you, came here not wil-

lingly or wittingly. The storm without drove me, the lights within drew me here, not knowing where I came And now I am ready to depart, not caring where I go."

During this short interview, the two old ladies had risen from their seats, and drawn near with looks of deep interest. The elder spoke:

"Oh, Iry, she is poor Anna's child! You will never let her go! She is my great-great-grandchild; only think of that, Iry! She *shall* not go, or, if she does, I'll go forth, with my century of years, and beg with her!"

"Peace, peace, grandmother, be easy," replied the admiral.

Then turning again to Annella, he said, sternly:

"Your father?"

"Is in his grave," answered the girl.

"Thank heaven for that!" were the words that rose to the lips of the veteran; but a glance at the face of his grand-daughter repressed their utterance.

"When did he die?" he asked.

"On Thursday last," she answered.

"Why did he not write to me in all these years?"

"Grandfather, if he had been happy and prosperous, he would have written; but he was the reverse of all this, and he would not write."

"But *my* blood ran in *his* child's veins! and if he was unhappy and unsuccessful, he should have written to me! I am not flint!"

"Grandfather, he was unhappy only in the loss of her whom your unkindness hurried to the grave. And any help from your relenting hand, that came too late for her relief, came much too late for his acceptance! Grandfather, he loved your daughter too truly to enjoy a benefit that she could not share."

The admiral groaned in the spirit, but did not reply. After a few minutes of silence, during which all the other

members of the circle looked on in painful suspense, he inquired:

"How came you out wandering alone in this remote country, so far from the scene of your father's death? Had he no friends to look after his orphan child?"

"Grandfather, it is a very long story; but I will tell you if you would like to hear it."

"Yes, but sit down; sit down there in the little chair beside Madame Pezzilini. And now go on," said the admiral, throwing himself into his own elbow-chair.

Annella commenced, and gave a short history of her life in the camp with her father; dwelling on his services in the Crimean war and the Indian insurrection, glancing slightly at the circumstances that drove him to sell his commission, and surpressing altogether the fact of that fatal habit that caused his ruin.

But notwithstanding the delicacy with which she treated her father's memory, the experienced veteran understood it all.

Annella suppressed also the incident of the pauper funeral; but dwelt fondly upon the benevolence of her landlady, and especially on that of the beautiful, foreign-looking lodger, who had arrived in London only the day before, and who seemed to have so deep a sorrow of her own.

Something in the manner of the girl in describing her lovely benefactress attracted the particular attention of the Princess Pezzilini, who began with much interest to question the young girl.

"When did you say this young lady reached London?"

"On the morning of Wednesday."

"How was she dressed?"

"In deep mourning."

"Will you describe her personal appearance?"

"Oh, yes; she was so beautiful it would be a real pleasure to do so. She was rather small and slender, but not thin. She had a clear, olive complexion, with full, pouting,

crimson lips, and large soft, dark eyes, shaded with long black eyelashes, and arched with slender, jet black eyebrows, and her hair was black as jet, and curled in long spiral ringlets all around her head."

"Had she a little black mole over her right eye?"

"Yes; and another at the left corner of her mouth; they were both very pretty."

"It is Eudora Leaton!" said the princess, addressing the admiral.

"There is no doubt of it, and I shall give information to the police to-morrow," replied the latter.

"Sir?" inquired Annella, looking uneasily, she scarcely knew why, towards her granfather."

"Nothing, my dear, only we think the young lady you mention is an acquaintance of ours. And now, my dear, your looks betray so much weariness, that I must order you off to bed. Grandmother, will you touch the bell?"

Mrs. Stilton complied; and Mr. Jessup made his appearance.

"Send Broadsides here, Jerry," said Mrs. Brunton.

The housekeeper obeyed the summons.

"Broadside, show Miss Wilder into the suite of rooms formerly occupied by her mother; and look out to-morrow for a discreet person to attend her as lady's-maid," said Mrs Brunton.

The housekeeper courtesied in assent, and led off Annella, saying, as she preceded her up stairs:

"I told you, my dear, that when you found yourself here you were all right, and you see now that I spoke the truth, for you *are all right!*"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE FUGITIVE RETAKEN.

Shuddering, she strove to speak
Once more in nature's strong, appealing tones,
To supplicate—then came a shriek
That died in heavy moans.—*L. V. French.*

MEANWHILE Eudora remained in strict seclusion at her obscure lodgings in the Borough. Her voluntary close confinement within her own apartments excited no suspicion in the guileless heart of her landlady, who ascribed it to the recent bereavement and extreme sorrow which her deep mourning and pallid countenance seemed truly to indicate.

Mrs. Corder had formed her own opinion concerning her beautiful lodger. No one had deceived the good woman, but she had quite naturally deceived herself; and so thoroughly was she persuaded of the truth of her own theory, that, when any chance visitor dropped in at evening to gossip, she informed her that the new lodger was the orphan daughter of a country clergyman, and had come to town to seek employment as a daily governess. And if any one had asked Mrs. Corder how she obtained her information, she would have said—and thought—that Miss Miller had told her.

Meanwhile Eudora passed her days in a heavy, deadly suspense and terror, and her nights in broken sleep and fearful dreams, from which she would start in nervous spasms. Every day her health visibly declined under this tremendous oppression.

The landlady ascribing her illness to inordinate grief for the death of her parents, sought every means to soothe and entertain her.

On the morning of the fifth day of her residence beneath the roof, the landlady brought her a letter, saying:

"Here now! I suppose this is to bring you some good news; an offer of a situation perhaps in some nobleman's family, who knows?" And the good woman stuck her arms akimbo and stood at rest, evidently anxious to be a participator in the "good news."

Eudora suspected the disguised handwriting to be that of Malcolm Montrose, and with trembling fingers opened the letter. It was without date or signature, and very brief, merely saying:

"My Dearest One—All is well as yet—the hounds are off the scent. Do not answer this letter; it might not be safe to do so. Keep close, and wait for another communication."

Eudora put the letter in her bosom, and waited for an opportunity to destroy it.

"Then it isn't good news," said the sympathetic landlady, closely inspecting Eudora's troubled face.

"It does not offer me a situation," replied Eudora, evasively, and blushing deeply at the prevarication.

"Well, never mind, dear; you'll have better fortune tomorrow, perhaps. And now I am not a-going to let you mope. You must go out and take a walk."

Eudora thanked the landlady, but declined the proposition, and gently expressed her wish to be alone, whereupon the kind creature sighed and withdrew.

As soon as she found herself free from the watchfulness of her kind hostess, Eudora struck a match, burned her letter on the hearth, then threw herself into a chair, covered her face with her hands, and sank back in the stillness of a dumb despair.

While she sat thus the landlady suddenly broke in upon her in a state of great excitement, exclaiming:

"Oh, my dear Miss Miller, you *must* excuse me; but I couldn't help coming to tell you, for I knew you would like to hear it—"

"What is it, Mrs. Corder?" Eudora languidly inquired.

"Why, that vile, wicked, infamous creature—that toad, that viper, that rattlesnake as poisoned all her good uncle's family—have broke loose from the perlice and run away."

"Indeed," was the only answer that Eudora could utter forth. Her throat was choking, her heart was stopping, her blood freezing with terror.

"Yes! but oh! they'll catch her again, the tiger-cat! for there's a reward of a hundred pounds offered for her arrest, and a full description of her person that nobody *can't* mistake! Here, my dear, read it for yourself," said Mrs. Corder, handing the newspaper to Eudora.

The poor girl took it in desperate anxiety to read the advertisement, and ascertain how far the description might suit all medium-sized young brunettes, and how nearly it might agree with her own peculiar individuality.

She essayed to read, but as she held the paper, her hands trembled, her eyes filmed over, and her voice failed.

With an appealing look she held the paper towards Mrs. Corder, who took it, saying:

"Well, my dear, you *are* the nervousest I ever saw, and no wonder. But for all that you would like to hear it. Shall I read it for you?"

"Yes," was the only answer that Eudora could breathe.

The landlady seated herself, and with an air of innocent importance opened the paper, and holding it squarely before her large person, read as follows:

"One Hundred Pounds Reward.—Absconded from Allworth Abbey, near Abbeytown, in the County of Northumberland, on the night of Tuesday last, Eudora Milnes Leaton, charged with having poisoned the family of Leaton, at Allworth. The fugitive is of medium hight, slender,

well-rounded, graceful form, and regular features, dark complexion, with black hair and black eyes. She wore, when she left, a full suit of deep mourning. The above reward will be given to any person who may apprehend and deliver up the said Eudora Milnes Leaton to justice."

Eudora felt that this description might suit any medium-sized young brunette in mourning as well as herself, and therefore breathed more freely, especially as she perceived that the unconscious landlady never once suspected the identity of her lodger with the advertised fugitive.

"There's for you, my dear; now, what do you think of that? They'll be sure to catch her again with *that* reward offered and *that* description given! She had better go and hide herself under the earth, for if she shows herself above ground, she is sure to be caught! Anybody would know her from that description the minute they clapped their eyes on her! I should, I'm sure, for I think I see her now, with her sharp, wicked black eyes, and sly leer and vicious looks!" said the landlady, gazing straight into the face of Eudora without the slightest suspicion of her identity with the fugitive; for good Mrs. Corder had an ideal portrait of the supposed criminal in her mind's eye that formed a complete blind to her discovery of Eudora.

"I hope the prisoner will be found and the truth brought to light," said Miss Leaton, fervently.

"And I hope so, too; and now, my dear, I will leave the paper for your amusement while I go down and see what Sally is about," said the landlady, leaving the room.

Eudora, as soon as she found herself alone, picked up the paper, and once more read the imperfect description of her own person.

"How fortunate for me that they did not think of the two little moles on my face! Even my innocent landlady must have detected me by them had they been mentioned," thought Eudora to herself. Yet still her heart was filled

with dismay, and she felt an oppression of the lungs and a difficulty of breathing, that induced her to rise and open the door for a freer circulation of air.

As she did this, her attention was arrested by a knock at the private door down stairs.

As she was in that condition of peril when every sound struck terror to her heart, she paused and listened.

She heard the landlady go to the door and open it, saying, in a tone of surprise and displeasure:

"Well, whatever can be your business here with me or my house or family?"

"We come with a warrant for the arrest of Miss Eudora Leaton, charged with having poisoned her uncle's family, and supposed to be now lying concealed in your house," replied a voice that Eudora, in an agony of terror, recognized as that of Sims, the detective policeman, who had had her in custody at Allworth Abbey. Though nearly dying, she leaned far over the railings to hear farther.

"Eudora Leaton in my house, indeed! You must have taken leave of your senses, man! I'll sue you for slander! Pray, is my house a harbor for poisoners?" exclaimed the landlady, indignantly, placing her arms akimbo, and filling up the door with her burly person.

"Of course not, mum; nobody says that it is, or means that it shall be, and nobody accuses you of wilfully concealing the fugitive—"

"They'd better not!" interposed the landlady.

"Well, they *don't* but you have a young lady lodging here who arrived last Wednesday morniug—a dark young lady, dressed in black?"

"Yes, but there are hundreds upon hundreds of dark young ladies dressed in black in London, and they aint all poisoners—God forbid! And this one with me aint Eudora Leaton, nor no such demon; on the contrary, she is Miss Miller, and an angel, that's what she is!"

"But for all that, mum, you must let us see this Miss Miller; you can have no objection to that?"

"Yes, but I *has* an objection; I has a very particular objection to any party of perlice intruding into a modest young lady's private apartments in *my* house. And so you had better go about your business," said the landlady, still stopping the way with her large form.

"We are sorry to trouble you, Mrs. Corder, but it is absolutely necessary for us to see this lodger" insisted the detective.

"But as my lodger happens to be a dark young lady in black, you may take her up by mistake, and that would kill the poor young creature."

"No danger, Mrs. Corder; we are both well acquainted with the personal appearance of Miss Eudora Leaton, having held her in custody for a whole day and night before her escape. It is only necessary for us to see this lodger for one moment, in order to know whether she is Eudora Leaton or not. If she is, we must take her at once; if she is not, you will be instantly relieved of our presence. And now I hope you will not longer hinder us from the discharge of our duty."

"Oh, certainly not—certainly not! Search! search by all manner of means, if you can't take an honest woman's word for it!" said the landlady, sarcastically. "Only for decency's sake, you must let me go before you, and tell Miss Miller before you burst in upon her privacy."

"Very well, mum; but we must follow close behind you to prevent accidents. Lead the way, then," replied Sims.

Eudora heard this conclusion, and turned with the wild instinct of flying or hiding, she knew not how or where.

The landlady led the way up stairs, and rapped at Eudora's door. There was no answer. Then the policeman quickly pushed himself in front of the landlady, and suddenly opened the door.

Eudora stood in the middle of the floor, with her hands

clasped and extended in mute appeal, her face blanched with terror, and her eyes strained in anguish upon the intruders.

"It is herself," said Sims, advancing into the room.

"I knew it before I saw her," added his companion, following him.

"It's not! you're both on you clean mad to say so, only because she happens to have dark hair and eyes like that Eudora devil! I suppose you'd even be after taking up my Sally on suspicion, only she happens to be fair complected," exclaimed the landlady, vehemently.

"The young lady herself cannot deny her own identity. Are you not Miss Leaton?" inquired Detective Sims, addressing the panic-stricken girl.

"No!" screamed the landlady, before her lodger could reply; "no, I tell you she is Miss Miller!"

"I spoke to you, miss; is not your name Eudora Leaton?" inquired Sims, confidently.

"It is; I am, indeed, poor Eudora Leaton!" said the miserable girl, in a dying voice, dropping her head upon her bosom, and letting her clasped hands fall asunder helplessly by her side.

"Then please to hold out your wrists, miss," said the officer, drawing from his pocket a pair of light steel handcuffs connected by a short, bright steel chain.

Eudora mechanically obeyed, without the highest suspicion of what was about to be done.

"Sorry to have to clasp these ornaments on your wrists, miss; but when a prisoner displays such a wonderful talent for escape as you have, why, we must take proper precautions. Hold your hands up a little higher, if you please, miss—there!" said Sims, snapping the handcuffs upon her delicate wrists; there, now, I dare say, as your waiting-maid never clasped your gold bracelets when you were going to a party quicker than I have these. And these, though they are of steel, are as light and as bright as possible, and steel is very fashionable now; and as for

the chain that connects them, it is for all the world like the handle of an elegant reticule. You see I selected the pattern of the ornament with a view to the delicacy of the wearer," concluded the man, carefully adjusting the fetters.

"And now, mum," he added, turning to the landlady, will you get Miss Leaton's bonnet and shawl, and so forth, and put them on her, while my comrade goes out and calls a cab?"

The landlady, since the confession of Eudora, had been standing the very image of dumb consternation.

The request of the policeman broke the spell of silence that bound her, and she burst into a passion of tears, sobbing and exclaiming:

"Well, who'd a thought it? I wouldn't—no! I wouldn't a believed it if an angel from heaven had come down and told me! and I can scarce believe it even now when I look into her innocent face! Oh, my dear! say it was all a mistake! say as how you are *not* Eudora Leaton, and *not* a poisoner, or you'll break the mother's heart in my bosom!" she cried, extending her arms with yearning tenderness towards the miserable girl.

"Oh, Mrs. Corder! I am indeed Eudora Leaton, but no poisoner; as the Lord in heaven sees and hears me, no poisoner! Your pure and honest heart must read and understand me rightly! Oh, come, look into my eyes, deep down into my soul, and see if it is stained with such an atrocious crime!" said Eudora, clasping her fettered hands, and raising her beautiful eyes to the face of the landlady.

"No, indeed!" exclaimed the latter; "since you are Eudora Leaton, you are wrongfully accused! I'd stake my life upon it, you are wrongfully accused! I believe you to be as innocent of that deed as my own Sally, that I do!"

"Oh, thank you! thank you for that! for you believe only what God knows to be true! I am innocent!" wept Eudora.

"I know you be, my poor child! Oh, Mr. Perlice, look at her! just look at her sweet face and soft eyes, and tell me if it is possible for *her* to be guilty of what she is accused with?" said the landlady, taking the detective by his arm, and turning him towards the prisoner.

"The testimony, mum, the testimony!" said that functionary, coolly.

"Oh, the testimony!" The landlady shut her lips to prevent the escape of a word that would not have become the mouth of an honest woman.

"Fax is fax, mum! And now, as we want to catch the three o'clock train, I wish you would show your kindness to your lodger by putting her things on her."

"I won't! You shan't take her away, you cruel man!" cried the landlady, roaring with grief.

"Do, Mrs. Corder, get my bonnet and shawl; we must not resist the warrant, you know," said Eudora, in an expiring voice, as, unable longer to support her sinking frame, she dropped into the nearest chair.

"But I *will* resist! It's cruel! it's monstrous! it's infamous to drag you off in this way!" sobbed the landlady.

"I'll tell you what, mum, unless you get what the young lady requires, and help her to prepare for her journey, I shall have to go into her chamber and be her waiting-maid myself, which might not be so pleasant, you know, for I expect Rutt here every minute with the cab."

At this moment, indeed, the other policeman entered to say that the carriage was at the door.

"Come, come, bestir yourself, my good woman, or shall I go?" said Sims, hurrying towards the chamber door.

"No," said Mrs. Corder, losing her temper, forgetting her respectability, descending into the depths of Billingsgate, and fishing up its blackest mud of vituperation to fling at the policemen.

She resisted, abused, and threatened them at such a rate that, had they not been very forbearing, besides having a

much more important matter in hand, they might reasonably have taken her in charge.

When the landlady had fairly screamed herself out of breath, so that she was obliged to stop and pant, Eudora took advantage of the momentary silence to lay her manacled hands upon the arm of the angry woman, and to falter:

"Dear, good friend, all this is well meant, but it does me harm instead of good. We cannot possibly resist lawful authority; and so, if you really desire to serve me, do that for me which I should not like a policeman to do, and which I cannot do for myself."

"Oh, poor, fatherless, motherless child! Oh, poor, dear little fettered wrists!" cried the landlady, sobbing and weeping over them.

"Come, mum, come! time's up!" said Sims.

He was answered by another shower of tears and abuse, as Mrs. Corder retreated into the bed-room.

She soon re-appeared with Eudora's outer garments, which she carefully arranged upon the person of their owner, folding the shawl so as to conceal the degrading fetters.

"And now, where be you a-going to take my poor darling? Not to Newgate, I hope?"

"Oh, no, mum, we must take her back to Abbeytown, where she will have a fair trial and full justice, that you may depend upon, so don't be alarmed," said Sims, with more good nature than could have been expected of him under the circumstances.

When Eudora was ready she sank into the arms of her rough but honest friend, who embraced her fervently, praying:

"Oh, may the Lord deliver you from all your enemies and all your troubles, my poor, helpless darling! and may the old Nick himself—"

"Hush, hush!" said Eudora, stopping her words with a

kiss; "let me go with the sound of blessings, not of curses, ringing on my ears! Good-bye, dear friend! May God reward you for all your kindness to me!"

And Eudora withdrew from her arms.

The landlady sank sobbing into a chair. The young prisoner, half fainting, was led away between the two policemen.

They took her down-stairs, and placed her in the cab which was immediately driven towards the King's-cross Railway Station.

They arrived just in time to catch the desired train. Eudora was hurried into a coupé, where she sat guarded on the right and left by the two policemen.

It was a miserable journey of about six hours. The policemen were reasonably kind to her, and whenever the train stopped for refreshments, they offered her food, wine, tea and coffee. But she refused all meat and drink, and sat in a stupor of exhaustion and despair.

It was after nine o'clock when the train arrived at Abbeytown. It was quite dark, but the station was well lighted, and the usual mob of guards, cabmen, and idlers was collected to see the train come in.

There were but few passengers for Abbytown, so that when the policemen stepped out of the coupé, leading their prisoner between them—and when Sims stood by, guarding her, while Rutt went to call a cab—they were exposed to the observation of the whole crowd, who gathered around, quickly identified the party, and began to whisper audibly that the notorious Eudora Leaton, the poisoner of her uncle's family, was there in custody of the police, and to elbow, push, and crowd each other in their anxiety to see her face.

Eudora, nearly fainting with distress, put up her hands to draw her veil closer about her face, and in so doing exposed her fettered wrists.

"Handcuffed, to, by all that's blue! What a desperate

'un she must be, to be sure," said a rude man, pushing near, and trying to look under her veil.

"Stand back, will you?" shouted Sims, angrily.

"Oh, we mustn't look at her, mustn't we? Well, then, I reckon the day'll come as we'll get a full view of her for nothing. Calcraft's patients don't wear weils to hide their blushes."

Eudora shuddered at this rude speech, when luckily the other officer came up with the cab, and she was hurried into it, out of the insulting scrutiny of the mob.

Among those who had gazed with even more interest than curiosity upon the hapless girl, was a tall, thin, mustachioed foreigner, wrapped in a large cloak, and having a travelling-cap pulled down low over his piercing eyes. He had come down alone in a first-class carriage, and now stood waiting upon the platform.

When the cab had rolled out of sight, and the train had started, and the bustle of the arrival and departure was over, the stranger turned to an *employée* at the station, and said:

"Who is that young girl that arrived in charge of the police?"

"That, sir? why, a most notorious criminal, sir, as has just been taken in London; by name Miss Leaton, sir; more's the pity, for it's a noble one to end in shame and ruin."

"Miss Leaton!—not of Allworth Abbey!—not the daughter of Lord Leaton? questioned the stranger in the strongest agitation."

"Oh, Lord, no, sir; not the daughter of Lord Leaton, but his niece. Lord, sir, haven't you heard about it? I thought the story had gone all over England."

"I have but just arrived in the country, and know nothing of the affair, but I am interested in hearing the particulars, if you will do me the favor of relating them."

"Oh, yes, sir, certainly, with great pleasure," said the man.

And it was indeed with *very* great pleasure that he commenced and related to a perfectly fresh hearer the oft-repeated awful tragedy of Allworth Abbey.

The stranger listened with the deepest interest. At the conclusion of the narrative, he said:

"The circumstances, indeed, seem to point out this young Eudora Leaton as the criminal; but from the glimpse I caught of her lovely face, she is just the last person in the world I should suspect of crime."

"Oh, sir, we musn't judge by appearances. Who looked more innocent nor William Palmer? He had just the most sweetest and benevolentest face as ever vas seen."

"I know nothing of the man of whom you speak; but the face of this young girl is certainly not that of a poisoner. And so I should like you to name over to me every individual of the drawing-room circle at Allworth Abbey at the time of Lord Leaton's sudden death"

"Yes, sir; that is easily done, for there were very few—Lord and Lady Leaton; their only child, Miss Leaton; their niece, Miss Eudora; and their guest, the Princess Pezzilini."

"Humph! And the domestic establishment, can you call its members over by name?"

"Lord, yes, sir! ever since that dreadful affair every individual member of that household is well beknown to everybody," replied the man, who immediately began and gave a list of all the maid and men servants in or about Allworth Abbey.

"Humph," said the stranger again; and then, after a few moments spent in deep thought, he thanked the narrator for his information, put a crown-piece in his hand, and requested him to call a cab.

The man touched his hat, hurried away, and soon returned with the cab.

"To the Leaton Arms," said the stranger, as he entered the cab, and threw himself heavily back among the cushions.

Meanwhile Eudora Leaton, in charge of the two policemen, was carried into the town.

It was considered too late to take her before a magistrate, or even lodge her in the county gaol, which had been closed for hours.

The policemen therefore conveyed her to a rude but strong station, or lock-up house, where drunkards, brawlers, thieves, and other disturbers of the night were confined until morning.

Eudora was thrust into a large stone room, with grated windows placed high up towards the ceiling, and rude oaken benches ranged along the walls. This apartment was without fire, beds, or separate cells.

It was occupied by about half-a-dozen abandoned women and various children, some of whom lay extended along the benches in the stupid sleep of intoxication, while others walked restlessly about, engaged in desultory conversation.

As soon as Eudora was brought into the room they ceased their talk to stare at her, as though she had been a vision from another world.

Truly, she was a strange visitant of such a place as that.

In a moment, however, they seemed to have fixed upon her identity, and began an eager whispering concerning her supposed crimes and probable fate.

As soon as the policemen had gone, and the strong oaken door was locked and barred upon her, and she found herself alone among these wretched outcasts, fear and loathing seized her soul, and she retreated to the remotest corner of the hall, where she crouched down upon the bench, and covered her face with her veil.

But Eudora had to learn in her misery that human sympathies still lived in the seared hearts of those poor women, dead though they seemed to all higher feelings.

While shrinking in horror from the sight and hearing of these lost creatures, Eudora heard one whisper to another:

"Go to her, Nance, you're the youngest of the lot, and maybe she'll not be frightened of you. Go to her, there's a good lass; see, she aint used to being in a place like this."

"I dunnot like to go, Poll. She's a lady, and I dunnot like to."

"But she is in trouble with the rest of us, Nance, and she's a stranger to the place, with no one to speak to. Go to her, there's a good lass."

"Well, if you'll go with me and speak first."

"Me! look at me, with my torn gown and my black eye; I should scare the soul out of the likes of her," said Poll, sighing.

"Bosh! she wouldn't see 'em; 'sides, if all's true as is said of *her*, *she* aint easy scared. Howsoever, and whatsoever she *has* done, I am sorry for her, seeing as she is in about the deepest trouble as any woman *could* be in! so let's both go and comfort her."

One touch of sympathy as well as nature makes all the world of kin.

Eudora's heart was touched; but though purity cannot do otherwise than shrink from the contact of impurity, and though Eudora still shuddered as these women approached her, yet she put aside her veil and looked gratefully towards them.

"Come, lass, don't be downcast; keep up a good heart in your bosom. There's many a one locked up here, and comes afore the beak, as is never sent up to the 'sizes; and many and many tried at the 'sizes as are never convicted, and more convicted as are never executed. So you see, my poor dear, as there are ten chances to one in your favor."

"And I am not guilty; that also should be in my favor," said poor Eudora, glad of any sympathy.

"To be sure you arn't, my dear! You arn't guilty, even supposing you *did* poison your uncle's family! We arn't

any on us guilty of anything in particular, no matter what we do. It's SOCIETY as is guilty of everything, as I myself heard well proved by an philanthrophysing gemman as spoke to the people on Fledgemoor Common," said the enlightened Poll.

"But I did *not* poison my uncle's family. Oh! my God! how can anyone think I could do such a thing," said Eudora, shuddering.

"Well, dear, I don't ask you to confess, which would be unreasonable; but I *do* tell you that it makes no difference to me; I pities you all the same whether you did poison 'em or not. For, maybe, you couldn't help it; and maybe they *deserved* poisoning, 'cause why? some people are more agrowoking nor rats and mice, as everyone allows it to be lawful to poison. And maybe they trampled on you being of an orphan niece. And leastways—it aint *you*, it's society as is to blame for it all, as the philanthrophysing gemman said at Fledgemoor Common. So, my darling, you just keep up your heart. And here, take a drop of comfort to help you to do so. Here is some rale 'mountain dew' as will get up your spirits just about right. Take a sip," said Poll, diving into the depths of a capacious pocket and drawing forth a flask, which she unstopped and offered to Eudora.

But the fumes of the gin were so repulsive to the latter that she waved it away, saying:

"I thank you; you are very kind, indeed; but I do not require anything."

"Well, if you won't take the gin, you must lie down and rest anyhow; for you look just about ready to faint away We'll make you the best bed as we can in this miserable place. Here, Nance, lend me your shawl; and lend me yours, Peg; we must be good to a poor girl as is in a thousand times deeper trouble nor we are ourselves, 'cause our lives is not in danger as her's be," said Poll, stripping the shawl from her own shoulders and folding and laying it

on the rude bench, and rolling Nance's shawl into a pillow, and retaining Peg's for a blanket.

"Now, my darling, take off your bonnet, and loosen your clothes, and spread your pocket handkerchief over this rum pillow, and try to take some rest, and you'll be all the better able to face the beaks to-morrow."

"I thank you; you are very, very good to me; and I know that the best thing I can do is to lie down as you advise me," said Eudora, with much emotion, for she had scarcely hoped to meet such tender sympathy from such rude natures.

And she took off her bonnet, unhooked the boddice of her dress, and laid her weary frame down on the little bed that their kindness had prepared for her.

Poll covered her carefully with Peg's shawl, and then bidding her good night, drew off her companions to the farthest end of the room, where they conversed in low whispers, for fear of disturbing "the poor young lady."

Left to herself, Eudora composed her mind to prayer; and as the prayers of innocence always bring peace, notwithstanding all the shame, grief and terror of her position, the poor girl sank into a strange calm, and thence into a deep sleep.

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN PRISON.

Oh, God! that one might see the book of fate,
And read the revolution of the times—
Make mountains level, and the continent,
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself
Into the sea! and other times to see
The beachy girdle of the ocean
Too wide for Neptune's hips.—*Shakspeare.*

CLEARLY broke the morning through the grated windows of the lock-up house. The beams of the rising sun slanting through the bars, shown upon the wretched inmates, some extended along the benches, some squatted upon the floor but all in a heavy sleep.

Eudora, lying covered up carefully in her remote corner of the room, out of the direct rays of the sun, also continued to sleep soundly.

An hour or two passed without anything disturbing the quiet of the prison, until at length the falling of the bars, opening of the door, and entrance of the policemen, awoke the sleepers, who commenced an unanimous clamor for food, for drink, and above all, for release.

Roused by the noise, Eudora started up and gazed wildly around, not comprehending her situation; but soon memory, with all its terrors, awoke, and nearly turned her into stone. She gazed upon her manacled hands, her prison walls, and her wretched companions, and her blood nearly froze in her veins.

The policemen had come to take the other women and the children before the magistrate. The three females who had befriended her the night before now came to her to reclaim their shawls, and with many kind wishes, took leave.

"Keep up your spirits, lass! don't let the beaks see you

down in the mouth! Lawk, it is only the *first* time going as is awful. By the time you've been hauled up afore the beak as often as I has, you won't mind it more'n I do. Will she, Nance?"

"Not a bit of it," said the girl addressed.

Eudora shuddered throughout her frame at this horrible style of consolation. And yet so real is the link that binds together the whole brotherhood and sisterhood of man and woman, and so intense in times of trouble is the craving of the human heart for human sympathy, that it was with feelings of longing and regret Eudora saw these wretched women depart.

She was left quite alone for an hour, at the end of which the detective Sims brought her some coffee and bread, of which he kindly advised her to partake.

"How long shall I have to remain here?" inquired the poor girl.

"Your examination before the magistrates is fixed for noon. It can't take place before, because of the witnesses having to be brought together."

"Thank you. Will you set down the coffee, and be kind enough to procure me a pitcher of water?"

The officer nodded, and went and brought the required refreshment, and then retired and barred the door upon the solitary prisoner.

And as soon as she was again left alone, Eudora, over whose habits of neatness no misfortune could prevail, took combs, brushes, and a towel from her travelling-bag, and with the aid of the jug of water, bathed her face, combed her hair, and arranged her dress as well as with her manacled hands she could. Then she drank the coffee and tried to compose her mind for the severe ordeal before her.

She had not long to wait. At a quarter to twelve the bars once more fell with a clang, the door was opened, and the two officers entered to conduct her before the magistrates. With her fettered hands she managed to put on

her bonnet, but could not contrive to arrange her shawl; but Sims performed this service for her with gentleness and delicacy, folding the shawl so as to conceal the manacles.

Then, closely veiled, she was led out between the two policemen, and conducted across the street to the Town-hall, in a front room of which the magistrates held their sessions.

A rude crowd of men, women and boys was collected in front of the building, waiting to get a sight of her face as she passed. But the policemen kindly hurried her through this crowd into the hall.

It was a large stone room, divided across the middle of the floor by an iron railing. Within this railing, behind a long table, sat three magistrates; the presiding Justice, Sir Ira Brunton, occupied the central position, while on his right sat Squire Humphreys, and on his left Squire Upton. At one extremity of the table sat the clerk, and at the opposite end stood the group of witnesses, consisting of Dr. Watkins, Dr. Hall, the Princess Pezzilini, two chemists, a policeman, and the domestic servants of Allworth Abbey.

Immediately before the table stood Malcolm Montrose, looking pale, anxious, and heart-broken. On seeing the entrance of Eudora guarded, he hurried through the little gate of the railings towards her, saying, in a low and hurried tone:

"Oh, Eudora! It is but an hour since I heard of your arrest—only when the sheriff's-officer arrived at Allworth to summon the witnesses; and I hurried hither immediately to see what I could do for you."

"Nothing, nothing, you can do nothing for me, dear friend; my case is so desperate that none but God can help me."

"But oh, Eudora——"

"Sir, we cannot allow any conversation with the prisoner," said Sims, hurrying his charge on to the immediate presence of the magistrates.

"Place a chair for her, officer; she is unable to stand," said Squire Upton, looking at the terrified and half-fainting girl with feelings that might have been compassion, but for the horror her supposed crime inspired.

Sims placed a chair directly in front of the table before the magistrates, and Eudora dropped rather than set down in it.

Sims then laid the warrant upon the table before their worships, and retreated behind the chair of his prisoner.

Sir Ira Brunton adjusted his spectacles, took up the warrant, looked over it, and then addressing the accused, said, coldly:

"Will you please to throw aside your veil, Miss Leaton?"

Eudora, with trembling fingers, obeyed, and revealed a face, so deathly in its pallor, that those who looked upon it shrank back and uttered exclamations of pity, for they thought the girl must be dying.

"Miss Leaton," pursued Sir Ira Brunton, "the warrant that I hold here charges you with the murder, by the administration of poison, of the late Lord and Lady Leaton and their daughter, the Hon. Agatha Leaton. I must say that I grieve exceedingly to see one of your age and sex and rank stand before us charged with so heinous a crime."

The deadly pallor of Eudora's cheeks were suddenly flushed with a hectic spot, as she faltered forth:

"I am guiltless; oh, sir, you who have known me ever since I came, an orphan, to this strange land, should know that I am."

"God grant that it may prove so," said the magistrate, sternly.

And the investigation immediately commenced First, the minutes of the coroner's inquest were read; and then the witnesses were examined in turn.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Vose, was called, and with many tears, and much reluctance, gave in her testimony:

"That Miss Eudora Leaton was the niece of Lord Leaton, and after Miss Agatha, the next heiress to the estate. Miss Eudora had nursed Lord Leaton through his fatal illness, preparing all his delicate food and drink with her own hands. She prepared the sleeping draught of which he drank ten minutes before his sudden death. Miss Eudora also nursed Miss Agatha through her last illness, which corresponded in all its symptoms to that of the late Lord Leaton Miss Eudora watched beside Miss Agatha on the last night of her life, and prepared the tamarind-water of which she drank just before her death. Lady Leaton drank of the same beverage just before her sudden demise."

Squire Upton inquired:

"Was the jug containing this beverage left out of the prisoner's keeping from the time of her preparing it to the time of Miss Agatha Leaton's death?"

"I think not. Miss Eudora prepared the drink in the housekeeper's room, and took it up to Miss Agatha's chamber, where she (Miss Eudora) watched through the night," replied Mrs. Vose.

Several others among the domestic servants were examined, and each one, in a greater or less degree, corroborated the testimony of the housekeeper.

The next witness examined was the family physician, Dr. Watkins, who testified that the symptoms of the sudden accessions of illness, which successively terminated in the death of Lord Leaton, Lady Leaton, and Miss Leaton, were those produced by the poison of St. Ignatius' Bean;—that traces of this poison were discovered in the autopsy of the dead bodies and in the analysis of the beverage prepared by Miss Eudora Leaton, and of which they drank just previous to their deaths;—and that a quantity of the same fatal drug was found in Miss Eudora Leaton's box.

The testimony of the doctor was corroborated by two physicians who had assisted in the autopsy of the bodies

and the analysis of the beverage, and by the policeman who had executed the warrant and discovered the poison in Eudora's possession.

The last witness examined was the Princess Pezzilini, who, with the exception of the scientific evidence offered by the physicians, corroborated the whole of the foregoing testimony.

The evidence being all collected, the prisoner was asked if she had any explanation to give before the magistrates should decide upon her case.

Slowly rising, and in a very faint voice, she answered:

"None that will do any good, I fear. I did, indeed, nurse my uncle and my cousin through their last illnesses—"

"Prisoner, you are seriously compromising yourself by making these admissions. You must be careful not to commit yourself again," said Squire Upton.

"Sir, if I speak at all, I can only speak the truth, and I cannot believe that the truth can hurt me. I repeat, then, your worships, that I did nurse my uncle and cousin through their last illness. I did prepare with my own hands all the food and drink of which they partook—"

"Prisoner, prisoner," said Squire Upton, in a tone of great sympathy, for—despite the conclusive evidence against her, it was impossible to look into her innocent eyes without feeling a doubt of her supposed guilt, and wishing to give her the benefit of that doubt—"prisoner, I must again earnestly warn you that you are fatally criminating yourself, a thing that the law does not require you to do. Justice affords even to the most guilty the opportunity of acquittal, which the criminal is not bound to destroy."

"Sir, I am not a criminal; and if speaking the truth is to destroy me, it must do so. I did prepare their food and drink, as I did everything else for their relief and comfort, because I loved them so much that I would have

given my life, if its sacrifice could have saved theirs. I put no injurious ingredient in anything that I made for them. And as for that deadly poison of St Ignatius' Bean, of which it is said they died, and which was found in my box, I do not know how it came there. I never, certainly, had it in my possession, never knew anything of its properties, never even heard of its existence before! And as I have spoken truly, so may the Lord deliver my life from this great peril!"

She concluded in a very low voice, and at the close of her little speech sank trembling into her chair again. Her simple defence, with its fatal admissions, was of course worse than useless; and her unsupported denial of the poisoning had not a feather's weight to counterbalance the crushing mass of evidence against her.

"Humph! I see but one course for us to pursue, and that is to send her to trial. What do you say, Mr. Humphreys? What do you say, Mr. Upton?" inquired Sir Ira Brunton, looking to the right and left upon his associate magistrates.

"I regret to be obliged to coincide with you," said Mr. Humphreys.

"It is very sad, very, very sad; but I see no possible alternative," said Squire Upton, looking with deep compassion upon the poor young girl.

"Fill out the mittimus, Wallace," ordered Sir Ira Brunton.

The clerk immediately filled out the commitment of Eudora Leaton, and placed it in the hands of detective Sims, with the order to take away his prisoner at once.

At this command a wild affright blanched the face of Eudora, who, in her utter ignorance of the magistrates' prerogative, clasped her hands, and raised her dilated eyes, in an agony of supplication, saying:

"Oh, sirs, I am innocent! God knows I am! Have pity on me!"

"My child," said the kind-hearted Squire Upton, who more than half-doubted her imputed guilt, "this is not final, you know. He pronounce no judgment upon your guilt or innocence, we only send you to take your trial before a higher court, where you may be fully acquitted. Meanwhile, no doubt your friends will procure you counsel from the highest legal talent in the kingdom, and this talent will devote itself to the task of clearing away these circumstances that appear against you; and if you are really innocent, as I hope that you are, take faith and patience to your heart, and pray and trust to God for their success and your deliverance."

Eudora listened to these words with eager, breathless interest; but, oh, they afforded her but little hope. She bowed in silent acknowledgment of the magistrates' kindness, and turned in resigned despair towards her custodians.

Malcolm Montrose, with anguish stamped like death upon his brow, came forward, and, in a choking voice, said:

"Gentlemen, if any amount of bail would suffice to set her at liberty—"

"Mr. Montrose, the Queen of England could not bail out a prisoner charged with the crime of which she stands committed," said Sir Ira Brunton, sternly.

Ah! Malcolm knew this as well as the magistrates did; he had only spoken in the transient madness of grief and desperation. Now he turned to the prisoner, and said:

"Eudora, throw yourself upon the mercy of heaven, since there is so little left on earth. Oh, pray to God as I shall pray for you, and try to bear up under this heaviest affliction through these darkest of days. I will leave for London to-night, and retain the best counsel that can be procured. I will bring them to you to-morrow. Oh, try to endure your life until then."

"Mr. Montrose," said Sir Ira Brunton, "the prisoner

must be at once removed; we are waiting to examine other cases."

"Good-bye until to-morrow, Eudora. Before you reach your prison walls, I shall be speeding towards London to bring down your counsel. Heaven be with you, most innocent and most injured girl."

And pressing her hand fervently, he relinquished it, and hurried away, to throw himself into the next up-train.

Eudora was led out between the two officers, placed in a cab, and driven towards the gaol.

The prison—situated on the outskirts of the town—was a great, grim-looking, dark, gray stone building, pierced by narrow grated windows, and surrounded by high stone walls.

Poor Eudora's stricken heart collapsed and sank within her as the cab drew up before this formidable-looking stronghold.

The policemen alighted, handed their prisoner out, and rang at the grated gate in the wall, which was immediately unlocked and opened by the turnkey on duty there.

The terrified, half-fainting girl was led into a close court-yard, where the very wind of heaven, that bloweth where it listeth, was scarcely free to move, and across it, towards the main entrance of the prison, a low, narrow, iron-bound oaken door, approached by six steep stone steps in the thickness of the wall.

Here again the policemen rang, and the door was opened by the keeper on duty, who admitted the whole party into a gloomy-looking stone hall, where a turnkey received and silently conducted them to a side-door on the right leading into the gaoler's office.

Here the sinking girl was permitted to sit down while the gaoler received the warrant for her confinement, entered her name upon the prison books, gave a receipt for her person, and discharged the policemen, who immediately left.

When they were gone, the gaoler looked with the utmost interest and sorrow upon the unhappy girl left in his custody; and well he might, for it was the father of Eudora whose kind efforts had procured his appointment to the office which he now held.

He went to a small cupboard in the wall, and poured out a glass of sherry, which he brought to her, and with paternal kindness compelled her to drink.

The generous wine certainly called back the ebbing tide of her life, and when Mr. Anderson saw this, he said:

"Do not be too much cast down, Miss Leaton. Hope for the best. Meantime, while you are left in my charge, I will try to make your confinement as easy as I can, consistently with my duty and your safe keeping."

"I thank you," breathed Eudora, in a low voice, and with a slightly surprised look; for the poor child's abstract idea of gaolers had been that they were terrible, avenging demons, having indeed the shape of men, but being set aside from common human nature by reason of their odious office. And to see in this dreaded monster a benevolent little man, who spoke gently and acted kindly, was a new revelation.

"And now I will take you to your cell, where at least you may lie down and take the rest that you seem to need so much. I will make you as comfortable as circumstances will admit; and as you are not here for punishment, but only to await your trial, you may be allowed many privileges that are denied to those who are confined for offences."

"I thank you," again sighed the poor girl, whose tortured brain could shape no other form of reply, and whose aching heart could take no interest in the minor comforts or discomforts of her situation, while the appalling calamity of her approaching trial and probable fate stared her in the face.

But she arose and followed the gaoler, who led her back

into the hall, up a flight of steep stone stairs, and along a narrow corridor flanked each side by grated doors.

About midway down the length of this corridor, he paused and unlocked a door on the right hand, and led his prisoner into a stone cell, very small but very clean, having a grated window at the back, and furnished with a cot-bed, and a wooden stand and chair.

"I place you here," said Mr. Anderson, "because the window looks down upon the prison garden and out over the heath, so that your eyes may travel though your feet may not. And now sit down, if you please, while I take off those handcuffs."

Eudora sank into the only chair, and held up her hands while the gaoler relieved her of those galling fetters, which, long after they had been removed, left livid circles around those delicate wrists to show where they had pressed.

"And now I will go and send one of the female turnkeys to bring you what you need. And if there is anything that will—I cannot say add to your comfort, but—detract from your *dis*comfort, send word by her to me, and, if possible, you shall be accommodated with what you want," said Anderson, leaving the cell and locking the door.

Eudora took off her bonnet and shawl, cast herself upon the narrow bed, closed her eyes, threw her arms up over her head—it was almost with a sense of pleasure that she felt them free again—and abandoned herself to the natural attitude of the prostration of grief.

She had scarcely lain thus for five minutes when the door was again unlocked, and a woman, coarse in person, but civil in demeanor, entered the cell, bringing a basin, pitcher of water, and towel, all of which she placed upon the stand.

Hearing this woman moving about the cell, Eudora, without changing her attitude, listlessly opened her eyes.

The woman then pointed to the conveniences she had brought, and said:

"Mr. Anderson wishes to know if there is anything else you would like."

Eudora shook her head in silence, and the woman retreated, and once more locked the prisoner in.

Two or three hours passed, in which Eudora, lying still upon her narrow prison bed in the dull anguish of despair, felt as if her heart was slowly and painfully dying, but without the hope of ultimate death.

Everyone who has suffered the extremity of suspense, grief, or despair, knows the dread sensation of this dying life or living death. It is that which even in youth, in health, and in a few hours, has power to wrinkle the brow, whiten the hair, and disorganize the heart.

It was quite dark, when the female turnkey, whose name was Barton, entered the cell, bringing Eudora's supper on a tray, and saying:

"This was sent you from Mr. Anderson's own table, miss; do try and eat a bit."

Eudora shook her head in silence; but the woman was kindly persistent, and the poor girl, by nature very docile, lifted herself up and ate a small bit of mutton-chop, and drank a little port wine.

"And now, miss, if you've brought your night clothes along with you, I would like to help you to undress, and see you comfortably in bed before I leave you, for you do not look so very over strong."

In this instance also Eudora meekly yielded to the guidance of Mrs. Barton, took a night-gown from the travelling-bag, and permitted the good woman to help her to undress and get into bed.

And then Mrs. Barton hung up Eudora's dress, and bidding her be of good cheer, and wishing her good-night, left the cell, and locked her in.

And as soon as the poor girl found herself again alone, she closed her eyes, clasped her hands, and raised her heart in prayer to God for strength, comfort, and deliverance.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE MYSTERIES OF EDENLAWN.

She deemed him dead, in a foreign land;
Did her smile come back with its glory bland,
Lighting her face as in other years,
Ere shame and sorrow had taught her tears?

He was dead, and the secret of shame and gloom
Lay buried deep in his distant tomb!
No more should she shudder to hear his name,
With a chilling heart and a brow of flame.—*C. A. Warfield.*

If Allworth Abbey was the most ancient and gloomy, and if the Anchorage was the most commanding and cheerful, assuredly Edenlawn was the most beautiful and delighful estate in the neighborhood of Abbeytown.

The three estates formed a right angle, of which Allworth Abbey was the eastern, Edenlawn the southern, and the Anchorage the western points.

Edenlawn was equi-distant, about three miles from the two.

The mansion was an elegant modern edifice of white stone, in the Grecian order of architecture, crowning the summit of a green and wooded hill that ascended gradually from the banks of the lovely little lake Eden. A wide vista had been opened between the trees from the white front of the mansion down to the clear waters of the lake. This vista was laid out in terraces, with stone steps leading down the centre, from level to level, from the house to the lake. It was adorned with parterres of beautiful flowers, groves of rare shrubs, and groups of fine statues.

On each side of these ornamented grounds, and behind the house, stood the ancient woods, where the fine old forest-trees were kept well trimmed and free from under-

growth by the zeal of old Davy Denny, the head-gardener, whose care of the place was a labor of earnest love.

And this was well, else, for all the interest taken in it by the proprietress, the Honorable Mrs. Elverton, this paradise might have fallen into desolation, or been transformed to a Gehenna.

For this beautiful Edenlawn, though a comparatively new place, was a house with a very dark history.

It was some years before the time of which we now write that the Honorable Hollis Elverton, only son of Baron Elverton of Torg Castle, in Yorkshire, while staying in Paris, married the beautiful and haughty Athenie de la Compte, daughter of that celebrated General de la Compte who held so high a place in the esteem of the ex-King Louis Phillippe and in the councils of the nation.

Athenie de la Compte was a tall and dark brunette, with raven-black hair and flashing black eyes, and with an imperious temper and a commanding presence.

Immediately after their marriage the young couple set out for a lengthened tour on the Continent, and came to England only at the end of twelvemonths.

After a short season spent in London, where the imperial beauty of Mrs. Elverton created an immense sensation, at the close of the summer the young husband brought his youthful wife home to his beautiful villa of Edenlawn, which had been built, furnished, and adorned by Lord Elverton expressly for the residence of his son and daughter-in-law.

A few days after their settlement at home they were joined by a select party, of invited guests, who came down from town on a visit of a few weeks.

Mrs. Elverton then issued cards for a large evening party to all the neighboring nobility and gentry. The party was a great success, and formed the initiative of a series of neighborhood festivities.

It was in the midst of all this gaiety that the thunderbolt

fell that struck the proud Athenie to the dust and spread a desert round her.

On a certain evening Mr. and Mrs. Elverton, and the friends who were staying with them, had returned late from a dinner-party given at the Anchorage. The visitors had withdrawn to their several apartments for the night; but Mr. and Mrs. Elverton, as was their daily custom, remained for a few minutes behind them in the drawing-room to discuss the events of the day before retiring to rest.

While, with the buoyancy of youth, love and joy, they were sitting talking and laughing together, a footman entered the room and announced a stranger who imperatively demanded to see Mr. Elverton, and would take no denial, although Charles had explained that it was too late for his master to be disturbed.

Mr. Elverton though the most courteous of gentlemen, could not be said to have yielded so much to courtesy as to curiosity to know who this importunate stranger might be, when he ordered Charles to show the unseasonable visitor into the library, whither he himself immediately proceeded.

The stranger was a woman of majestic presence, whose tall, commanding figure was wrapped in a long black cloak; and whose unknown features were concealed beneath a thick black veil. Thus much only the servants saw of her as Charles showed her into the library, whither she was instantly followed by Mr. Elverton.

Charles, in the conscientious discharge of the principal duty of his office, applied his ear to the keyhole; but his virtue was not rewarded by any satisfactory result. He only heard a low exclamation of astonishment from his master, a muttered reply from the stranger, and then the sound of their steps retreating towards a distant part of the room, where the words of their conversation were quite inaudible.

The ingenuity and perseverance of Mr. Charles was really worthy of a better cause and a greater success. He

shut his eyes, plugged the orifice of his left ear with his little finger, and concentrated his five senses into the hearing of his right ear, which he plastered to the keyhole.

Alas! he could make out not a single syllable of that mysterious interview; and the few sounds that he heard only tortured his curiosity—these sounds were occasionally a deep, half-smothered groan from his master, and a sharp, sarcastic laugh from the stranger.

This secret interview lasted for about an hour, at the end of which Charles heard the footsteps coming down the room towards the door, and deemed it proper to withdraw from his post of observation. But Mr. Charles' limbs were so stiff and numb from long kneeling, that it was no easy matter to rise, while at the same time there was imminent danger of his being discovered in the act of listening when his master should open the door.

With a last desperate effort he struggled upon his feet; and then, as fortune crowns us when we least expect her to do so, he had the satisfaction of overhearing something. It was the voice of his master, saying, in a tone of anguish:

"You are a fiend! a fiend! H— never cast forth a blacker one to blast this fair earth!"

And the moment after Mr. Elverton pulled open the door, and hurried forth—alone! He crossed the hall, entered the drawing-room and shut the door after him.

Charles stared after his master, and then looked to the right and to the left, before and behind, above and below, and everywhere else, to see whither the stranger had vanished, but in vain, for the earth seemed to have swallowed her.

Then he entered the library, and turned on the full light of the gas, and searched every nook and cranny, still in vain. Finally, he came to the conclusion that the stranger had been let out through one of the French windows that opened from the library upon the lawn.

And having settled that part of the mystery to his satis-

faction, Charles turned off the gas, shut up the library, and came back to the hall, just in time to hear a wild shriek and a very heavy fall from the drawing-room and to see Mr. Elverton rush forth and run up stairs.

In astonishment and terror, Charles hurried into the drawing-room, where to his farther consternation, he found Mrs. Elverton extended upon the floor in a dead swoon. He hastened to summon the housekeeper and the lady's-maid, who came in great alarm to the assistance of their mistress.

Mrs. Elverton was carried to her room, where every means was used to restore her to consciousness. But when she came to her senses it was only to fall into the most fearful ravings, in which was darkly shadowed forth a calamity so direful, a grief so deep, a shame so intense, as raised the hair from the heads of the listeners with horror.

The housekeeper ordered everyone from the room, that none should hear these awful revelations. She also sent to summon Mr. Elverton to the bedside of his wife, but the master of the house was nowhere to be found. In her desperation she dispatched Charles for the medical attendant of the family; but it was near morning before Dr. Watkins could reach Edenlawn.

On his arrival he repaired immediately to the chamber of the suffering lady, but on hearing the appalling nature of her ravings, he warned the housekeeper to permit no one but herself to approach Mrs. Elverton until the latter should recover her senses.

During that morning the illness of the lady assumed another phase, and before noon an infant daughter was prematurely ushered into life.

But Mr. Elverton was not there to bless his first-born; and though messengers were dispatched in all directions to seek him, yet no clue could be found to the whereabouts of the missing master of the house.

Since the birth of her child Mrs. Elverton had fallen into

no more ravings, but lay in a sort of dull despair. To rouse her from this state, the infant, a fine and healthy one, beautifully dressed, was carried to her. But the great black eyes of the mother dilated with horror at the sight of her child, and shuddering with excessive emotion, she turned away.

Seeing how terribly the mother was agitated by the presence of the child, the doctor ordered it to be carried to the nursery, where a nurse was engaged to take charge of it.

Meanwhile the visitors assembled at Edenlawn had learned, from the confusion of the household, the illness of the mistress, and the absence of the master, that some great event, some crushing calamity, some ill-understood horror, had suddenly fallen upon the family. Learning from the physician that Mrs. Elverton was in no condition even to receive their adieus, they left with him their parting compliments for her, and set out for town.

The convalescence of Mrs. Elverton was very long protracted, but though, during the ravings of her delirium, she had shrieked forth the names of her husband and child in connection with some unimagined horror, yet, from the moment of her return to reason, she never once recurred to the existence of either. Her attendants wondered that she never inquired after her husband; but her physician warned them not to force the subject upon her attention. The babe was doing well in the nursery, but Mr. Elverton had not yet returned, nor had any clue been found to his disappearance.

It was a period of three months' duration before Mrs. Elverton was sufficiently recovered from her severe illness to make her appearance in the drawing-room, and, oh! how changed from the haughty and beautiful woman, who, some little time before, had been brought, a loved and happy bride, to Edenlawn!

The majestic form was indeed the same, but every vestige of color had fled from the classic face, leaving it white as

the chiselled marble it resembled. The imperious brow was painfully contracted, the proud eyes were darkly veiled, the scornful lips were bitterly compressed, and the whole countenance was deeply stamped with the ineffaceable marks of an incurable despair. No one who had seen her three months previous could look upon her without feeling that some unutterable misfortune had blasted her life.

Her friends and neighbors, who, during her illness, had sent regularly to inquire after her progress, now called to pay their compliments upon her convalescence. But Mrs. Elverton declined to receive any visitors, and commissioned the physician to make her excuses. She refused even to receive a pastoral call from the clergyman of the parish; and though a zealous Protestant, exact in all the forms of her faith, she shunned the Christian rite of churching, and absented herself entirely from public worship. And even when months had passed, and the venerable *bonne*, whom she had brought with her from Paris, ventured to urge upon her the duty of having the infant baptized, she shuddered, and to the horror of Madame Julien, replied:

"*Baptize her!* the baptismal waters, if sprinkled on *her* forehead, would hiss and fly off in steam, as if thrown upon red-hot iron."

About this time Baron Elverton, summoned in haste from his official duties in London, arrived at Edenlawn on a hurried visit to his daughter-in-law. He was closeted with her for an hour in the library, and at the end of the interview he—the case-hardened old judge of a thousand criminal trials—came forth alone, with his face as pale as death, and with blank horror stamped like madness on his brow. Without waiting to see his grand-daughter, he ordered a carriage to take him at once to the railway-station, whence he set out the same hour for London. He never came back to Edenlawn; but those who knew him well said that within a fortnight after his flying visit there the hair of Baron Elverton turned white as snow.

Months passed into years, and still the mystery of Edenlawn remained unsolved. No news was heard of Mr. Elverton. No explanation was offered by Mrs. Elverton. The unbaptized infant grew and thrived in health and beauty as well as if his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury had sprinkled her innocent brow; and she became the pet, the darling, and the idol of the household, although her wretched mother still continued to regard her as a creature thrice accursed. She was a healthy and a happy child, and consequently beautiful and good.

"*So* good, doctor, so very good," was the constant report of Madame Julien, or Madelon, as the old *bonne* was more familiarly called.

"So good is she; so very good? Well, then, as she has no other name, let us call her good—or Alma, which is the same thing," said the doctor, one morning.

And thus the infant, to whom her own mother strangely denied the rights of baptism, received the well-omened name of Alma

The infancy of the little heiress passed in the nursery until she had attained the age of seven years, when an accomplished governess was engaged to superintend her education, and she was removed to the school-room.

But this migration brought Alma no nearer to her mother, who continued to shun her presence.

Indeed, the greatest interest ever shown by Mrs. Elverton in her daughter, was upon the occasion of the latter being attacked with scarlet-fever, when the anxiety of the lady became intense; and such anxiety as it was! an anxiety that made everyone shudder! anxiety, in short—not that the child should live, but that she should *die!*

It curdled the blood of the boldest to see, that while the life of the little girl was in imminent peril, the face of the lady was lighted up with a wild, maniac hope. But one morning Dr. Watkins, who had been very devoted in his attentions to his little patient, after paying his usual visit

to the bed-side of Alma, entered the presence of Mrs. Elverton, and with his countenance radiant with satisfaction, said:

"I am happy to announce to you, madam, that our little Alma is out of danger. She will get well."

To the consternation of the good doctor, the lady dropped her clasped hands upon her lap, and while the old expression of incurable sorrow came back to her face, replied, in a voice of deep despair:

"I had hoped it might have been otherwise, but Heaven's holy will be done!"

It was when Alma was about ten years of age that Mrs. Elverton received the only news of her husband since the day of his strange disappearance. This was contained in an annonymous letter from St. Petersburg, announcing his decease in that city. Mrs. Elverton immediately wrote to the British Ministry at that Court, to ascertain the facts of the case; but after the most careful investigation, the utmost extent of information she obtained was this, that a stranger, an Englishman, of the name of Elverton, had died at St. Petersburg. He had left no papers to afford a clue to his identity; his linen and boxes were marked "H. Elverton." And at the time that this inquiry was set on foot the body of the stranger had been too long buried to afford the slightest possibility of its being identified even if disinterred; and under these circumstances the sanctity of the grave had not been violated.

Mrs. Elverton never discovered the writer of the annonymous letter. She did not consider the intelligence she had received of sufficient reliability to warrant her in publishing the death of Mr. Elverton, or in placing her family in mourning. Yet those most familiar with the lady's moods thought that in her secret heart she believed in the death of her husband, and derived satisfaction from the belief, for it was observed that from the day she first received the intelligence—true or false—her countenance, though re-

taining all its profound melancholy, lost its unnatural expression of horror and despair.

Still, she took no delight in the society of her innocent daughter; still she attended no place of public worship; received no company and paid no visits, except visits of condolence to the houses of affliction, or of charity to the abodes of poverty.

And so passed the years of Alma's childhood. The young girl, if unfortunate in her mother, was blessed in her governess—a woman of a Christian heart, a cultivated mind, and accomplished manners—who conscientiously devoted herself to the temporal and eternal welfare of her young charge.

It was to this lady that Alma owed not only all her worldly education, but all her religious instruction. It was through her governess that Alma was prepared for the Christian rites of baptism and confirmation, both of which she received when she was about fifteen years of age.

But after this Alma lost her friend, companion, and governess.

The curate to whom Miss Moore had been betrothed for eight years at length obtained a living, and claimed the long-promised hand of his bride, who took leave of her friends at Edenlawn, and went to make the happiness of a humble parsonage in Yorkshire.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE STRANGE INTERNIEW.

"And now they are standing face to face;
Hath a dream come over that sylvan place?
One of those visions ghastly and wild,
That makes her shrink like a frightened child?

"For a while she stood as a bird is said
To meet the gaze of the serpent dread,
Pale and still for a time she stood
In the midst of that woodland solitude."

ALMA grew up as beautiful as one of Raphael's picture angels; but her beauty was of a directly opposite style to that of her handsome mother. Alma resembled the patrician women of her father's family. Her form was of fairy-like proportions, small, slender, delicate, yet well-rounded and very graceful. Her features were of the purest Grecian type, her complexion was exquisitely fair, with the faintest rose-tint flushing cheeks and lips. Her hair was of a pale gold color; her eyebrows and eyelashes, of a darker hue, shaded deep blue eyes full of pensive thought. Hers was a beauty that might have gladdened a family circle and adorned society. But alas for Alma! Her young life passed in a worse than conventual seclusion.

Scarcely any form of existence in this world could be so lonely and monotonous as that of this fair girl at Edenlawn —Edenlawn, a paradise to look at, a purgatory to live in!

After the departure of her governess, Alma was literally solitary. Her mother, in the blind selfishness of a cherished grief, dwelt apart in her own private suite of rooms, which she never left except at the call of charity. Alma had neither brother, sister, friend, or neighbor; she was utterly companionless, and her life, therefore, more lonely than perhaps that of any other young creature in this world.

The children of the poorest parents have companions among their equals; the inmates of orphan asylums are herded together in great numbers; the cloistered nuns form large communities among themselves; even the convict prisoners work together in great gangs. In a word, the most wretched in this world were, in many respects, happier than Alma Elverton, the young and beautiful heiress-apparent of Edenlawn, Torg Castle, and the Barony of Elverton; for they at least enjoyed human sympathy and companionship, while she had no friend—not one—not a single creature of her own kind to speak with.

It is true there were laborers on the estate and servants in the house; but what society could the young girl find in them?

And there was her mother, retired within the citadel of her own mysterious and selfish sorrows; but what companionship could Alma find in her?

All young girls, as they develop into womanhood, yearn from their secret souls for a more perfect sympathy than they usually meet from their own family circles. This is the real cause of romantic school-girl friendships, and, alas! too frequently of other less harmless attachments.

In large and busy households, of many sisters and brothers, this aspiration is very much modified and rendered quite endurable. But the more lonely and idle the life of a young girl is doomed to be, the more intense is this secret yearning for sympathy. And if she happens to be of a poetic temperament also, the longing of her heart becomes the monomania of her mind.

Alma, with no one to converse with, no work to do, and no visits to receive or to pay, became an aspiring dreamer of beautiful dreams, impossible to be realized in this world of stern realities; for "love, still love!" was the burden of those dreams. And even as it takes a feast to satisfy the hungry, so it would have required the whole circle of human love—father's, mother's, sister's, brother's, friend's,

and lover's—to have satisfied the craving of Alma's starving heart. And she had none, not one atom of love, to keep that heart from perishing!

What do physicians mean by an atrophy of the heart? We all know what an atrophy of the stomach is—simply starvation for want of food. Is not an atrophy of the heart also starvation for the lack of love? He who said, "Feed my lambs," said also, "Love one another." And perhaps as many are perishing in this world for lack of love as for the want of food.

Alma's was an extreme case of this sort of starvation. And small as her experience was, she had seen, heard, and read enough to discover that her own life was very different from all other lives around her. At church, every Sunday, she saw happy family parties gathered together in their family pews. After the service, in the churchyard, she saw friends and neighbors greeting each other with affection and delight. She knew that, as the grand-daughter of the celebrated Baron Elverton, and as the heiress-apparent of his titles and estates, she was entitled to fully as much consideration as any other young lady in the county. Why did she not receive it?

From casual words and chance allusions, rather than from any detailed narrative or voluntary communication from the servants, Alma had gleaned as much of the domestic history as was known to the servants themselves. And she dreamed, wondered, and speculated upon the subject of the mystery that enveloped her family.

Her father! What was it that, on the night before her birth, had driven him in an agony of horror from his home forever?

Her mother! What was it that, from the hour of Alma's birth, had frozen that beautiful and ardent woman into the cold, hard statue that she now seemed?

Herself! What was it that set her apart, lonely and unloved, from all the human race?

Alma could have loved her mother, and been happy in her mother's love; but the cold and repellant atmosphere that surrounded the lady chilled and repulsed the maiden.

But Alma loved her unknown father with a love passing the love of woman, and all the mystery that hung over his sudden flight, his long exile, and his uncertain fate, only served to strengthen, deepen, and intensify this love.

Adjoining the library was a small study that had once belonged to her father, but which her mother was never known to enter. Here hung a full length portrait of her father, painted in London soon after his marriage. It represented a man in the prime of his youth, of a tall and finely-proportioned form, Grecian features, fair complexion, falcon-fierce blue eyes, and golden brown hair—a man of whom Alma seemed a small feminine copy.

Into this study Alma removed her work-table, her easel, paint-box, and books. And here, seated in front of the beloved portrait, Alma liked best to employ her mornings in needle-work, in drawing, reading, or dreaming of her unknown father. Her afternoons were passed in wandering by the margin of fair Eden's waters below the villa, or in roaming through the old woods behind the mansion, and ever dreaming of her unknown father, and yearning for his presence and his love.

Alma was very punctual in her attendance upon public worship, not only from religious principle—though that of itself would have been a sufficient motive to her—but also from the absolute necessity of at least looking upon the human beings with whom she could hold no other intercourse.

After the departure of her governess, she alone occupied the great family pew of the Elvertons, until Lady Leaton, who was then recently widowed, felt compassion for the lonely girl, and availing herself of the privilege given by a slight acquaintance with the Honorable Mrs. Elverton, invited Alma to sit with her family. There

seemed to be no possible objection to this plan, and the solitary girl was only too glad to accept the kind invitation and sit with a party of young creatures of her own age and rank. This party consisted now of Agatha and Eudora Leaton, and Malcolm and Norham Montrose.

Alma informed her mother of this courtesy on the part of Lady Leaton.

Mrs. Elverton made no absolute objection, but gravely shook her head and said:

"I have almost ceased to wage a vain war with destiny; yet, girl, I would warn you against one error that to you would be fatal! There are two young gentlemen on a visit to that family; it is their attentions that I would have you shun as you would shun eternal perdition! Beware of the Messrs. Montrose! Beware of all men! for, Alma, love and marriage are not for you!"

Alma grew pale as death at the awful words and manner of her mother, for she felt that the warning came too late, as warnings generally do.

Alma had been introduced to every member of Lady Leaton's party, and among the rest, to Captain Norham Montrose, who was at once deeply impressed by the fresh and delicate beauty of the fair young girl, and strongly attracted by the splendid prospects of the rich young heiress.

And Alma, with all her lonely heart and soul yearning and aching for companionship and sympathy, became too easily fascinated by the love-tuned voice and love-tempered gaze of the handsome young hussar.

A few weeks, therefore, irretrievably decided the destiny of Alma—she loved, and loved for ever!

To have gained the passionate love of a creature so good and beautiful, with a heart so fresh and pure, was a triumph such as had never before fallen to the lot of the fascinating young officer. And what at first had been to him a pursuit half of admiration, half speculation, became

at length a mad passion, an infatuation, a delirium! He could scarcely be said to live out of Alma's presence. The world to him soon came to be divided only into two parts —where she was, and where she was not; and time into two eras—when she was present, and when she was absent. He saw her only at church on Sundays, and the six days that intervened between were to him "spaces between stars."

To boldly ask the hand of this heiress of her grandfather and her mother, was nothing less than madness on the part of a young officer with only his pay. And yet, instigated as much by his overweening pride as by his headlong passion, Captain Montrose wrote to Lord Elverton and to Mrs. Elverton, asking their permission to pay his addresses to Miss Elverton at Edenlawn. From Lord Elverton he received a courteous but decided refusal—from Mrs. Elverton a sharp and peremptory denial.

And after this poor Alma's only social solace was taken away from her, and she was forbidden to go to church.

This prohibition, as might have been expected, did more harm than good; for whereas, before it was issued, the young lovers met only once a week at church in the presence of others, they now met almost every day alone in the woods behind Edenlawn. These meetings commenced not by appointment, but rather by accident. Alma, as has been already said, was in the daily habit of walking by the margin of the lake below Edenlawn, or in the woods behind the house.

Norham, missing her from her seat at church, and forbidden to call upon her at her mother's house, and longing for her society as the dying long for life, walked to Edenlawn, and rambled through the woods, only to be near the dwelling that contained his idol. In these rambles he met Alma. But an angel might have been present at these meetings for any indiscretion on the part of the young lovers.

Norham did indeed use all the eloquence of passion to persuade Alma to fly with him to Scotland. But dreary as was the home life of the unhappy girl, she was so far firm to her filial duty as to resist all his persuasions.

"No, no, Norham," she would answer; "my heart reproaches me bitterly enough for walking with you here, and I should not do it, perhaps, only I feel that if I did not see you sometimes I should go mad with loneliness. But, Norham, I will not farther wrong my mother. Wait until I am of age, and have the right to dispose of my hand; then, Norham, I will place it in yours."

And no arguments, entreaties, or prayers on the part of her lover availed anything against the conscientious resolution of Alma. And even when at length his leave of absence expired, and he was ordered to join his regiment, which was stationed in Scotland, he took advantage of this fortuitous combination of circumstances to urge upon his beloved Alma the consideration of the deep pain of separation, and the facilities for their union offered by the locality of his service, she remained true to her convictions of duty, and had the firmness to bid him adieu and see him depart.

To young creatures surrounded by sisters, brothers, and cousins, relatives, friends, and neighbors, the self-denial of this lonely girl will scarcely be appreciated.

From the time of her lover's departure for Scotland she saw no more of him until the day of the double funeral at Allworth Abbey.

We have already said that it was only in the times of their affliction that the Honorable Mrs. Elverton ever visited her neighbors. Thus recluse as she was, she had ordered her mourning coach, and with Alma seated by her side, had attended the funeral solemnities at Allworth Abbey.

In the course of that day Alma had exchanged a glance and a bow with Norham. And the next afternoon, *instinct*

rather than understanding led her out to take a walk in the woods behind Edenlawn.

It was a lovely summer's afternoon, and the low descending sun was striking his level yellow rays through the interlacings of the forest-trees, edging each leaf and twig, with a golden flame.

Alma wandered on, and in that mental struggle between duty and inclination, or rather between conscience and necessity, that occupies one half of our inner lives.

She was happy in the hope of seeing Norham, and miserable in the fear of doing wrong. This is a paradox of daily occurrence.

While she walked on in the dulcemarah, the bitter sweet of this forbidden hope, she heard the fallen leaves and twigs break beneath a firm footstep behind her.

Her breath stopped, her heart fluttered, her cheek crimsoned. She paused for the coming up of the footsteps, but she did not turn her head.

"I have the honor of speaking to Miss Elverton, I presume."

The voice of the speaker was deep, rich, and inexpressibly mournful.

Alma started, turned round, and dropped her eyes, while a deep blush mantled her face.

The speaker was a tall, finely-formed, fair-complexioned, and very handsome man, of about forty years of age.

While addressing Alma he held his hat entirely off his head, and stood with a courtly grace that the girl had never seen equalled.

She was naturally surprised and even terrified at the unexpected apparition of a stranger in that lonely place and at that late hour, but aside from these natural emotions, there was something in the aspect of the man that thrilled her with a feeling which was neither surprise nor terror, but something infinitely deeper than either.

"I have the honor of addressing Miss Elverton, I pre-

sume?" repeated the stranger, with the same gracious courtesy of tone and manner.

"Yes, sir," breathed the girl, with her heart throbbing quickly.

"Miss Elverton, does your mother still live?" inquired the deep voice of the stranger.

The throbbing of Alma's heart nearly suffocated her. Her breath came quickly and gaspingly. She threw her arm around a tree for support, and leaned her head against the rough bark, while she stole another look at the stranger.

Yes, there was the same noble head, with its bright locks of golden brown waving round the broad, white forehead; the same dark blue eyes with the falcon glance; the same Grecian nose, short, proud upper lip, and rounded chin; the same face, only a little older, that daily looked down upon her from the portrait in the study. As Alma realized this truth, she felt as though her last hour of life had come, and that she was dying in a dream,

"Does your mother still live?" repeated the stranger.

"My mother still lives, if breathing means living," answered Alma, in an expiring voice, and trembling in every limb.

The eyes of the stranger were fixed upon her—were reading her very soul. At length he spoke.

"Girl, your eyes never beheld me before, and yet—does not your instinct recognize me?"

"Oh, Heaven, my heart!" gasped the girl, leaning, pale as death, against the tree.

"Yes, your heart acknowledges him whom your eyes never before saw—"

"My father—"

"Hush—hush—no word of that sort—"

"Oh, my father—"

"Hush, hush, no word like that, I say!" repeated Hollis Elverton, in a sepulchral voice.

But his daughter, pale as death, trembled like a leaf, and

nearly fainting with excessive agitation, had entirely lost her self-possession.

She either did not hear or did not understand his strange words.

Extending her arms towards him with a look of imploring affection, and in a voice of thrilling passion, she cried:

"Father! oh father! will you not embrace your child?"

The tall figure of the man shook as a tree shaken by the wind, but he averted his face, and threw his hand towards her with a repelling gesture.

She dropped her arms with a look of shame, sorrow and wonder, murmuring:

"Never since I lived have I been pressed to my mother's bosom, or received a mother's kiss, or known a mother's love. And the father for whose presence my heart has longed through all the years of my lonely youth—the father whom my love has followed through all the years of his long exile—now, in the first moments of our meeting, repulses his child and turns away! Oh, father!" she exclaimed, in passionate earnestness, "what have I done that both my parents should hate me!"

"You have done nothing wrong, nor do we hate you, poor girl!" replied Elverton, in an agitated voice.

"*What am I*, then, that those who gave me life should turn shudderingly away from me as from a monster accursed?"

"Child, child, cease your wild questionings! There are mysteries in this world that may never be revealed until that last dread day of doom, when all that is hidden shall be made clear!"

After this there was silence between them for a few minutes, during which they gazed upon each other's faces with mournful, questioning interest. Then Hollis Elverton, in a gentle voice, inquired:

"What name have they given you, child?"

"My mother called me by no name, but the good doctor gave me that of Alma."

"Then you did not receive the rites of Christian baptism?"

"Not in infancy—not until I was old enough to act for myself in that respect; then I presented myself at the altar, and received at the same time the sacraments of baptism and confirmation."

"And your mother?"

"She made no objection, but gave me no encouragement. She was neutral in the matter; but, father, did I not do right?"

Hollis Elverton groaned, but made no reply. And again silence fell between them, while they studied each other with the same painful interest. At length she broke the spell by asking, in a tearful voice:

"Father, will you not accompany me to the house, and see my mother?"

"Never!" exclaimed Hollis Elverton, while a spasm of unutterable anguish convulsed his fine face.

"Alas, sir, if not to see her, what motive has brought you back to England?"

"Two of the strongest that can ever govern human action—the love of one I love, the hate of one I hate! I come to watch over and save an angel girl from utter ruin, and to hunt a demon woman to her doom!"

"Your words are strange and alarming, my father."

"And I can give you no explanation of them now; I am even here in secret. I must see you only in secret, and you must give me your word of honor never to mention this meeting, or even mention the fact of my return to England."

"Not even to my mother?"

"Not even to her; least of all to her!"

"Alas, alas, my father, do you hate her so?"

"*Hate her*?—hate your mother?—hate Athenie?—hate

my—oh, Heaven, Alma!—no, I do not hate her; on the contrary—"

Here his voice broke down, and raising his cloak, he veiled his agitated face in its folds.

"Alas, alas, my father! what horror was it that so suddenly burst asunder all ties of affection between you? Father—father, answer me!—tell me that it was not her fault—not my mother's fault!"

He dropped the fold of his cloak from his face, and looking for the first time angrily upon his daughter, demanded sternly:

"Why should you dare to ask if your mother was in fault?"

"Alas, I know not. I beg your pardon and hers. My short life has been made a desert by this mystery, father, and yet for myself I have never once complained, but when I know that her life is one prolonged agony, and now see the agony stamped upon your brow, I become half crazy, and think—I know not what."

"I will answer your question, unhappy girl; and assure you, in the presence of high Heaven, that our violent parting was not caused by your mother's fault. A purer, sweeter, nobler woman than your mother never lived," said Hollis Elverton, earnestly.

"Oh, God, I thank thee!—I thank thee—I thank thee for that!" cried Alma, in a thrilling voice that betrayed how heavy had been the burden of doubt that rested on her mind, and how ineffable was the sense of relief now that it was lifted off."

"You are satisfied?" inquired Elverton.

"For her, oh, yes; but oh, my father, tell me—this separation was not your fault either? she cried, clasping her hands, and gazing with imploring eyes into his face.

"No, nor my fault either, Alma; I swear it to you, by all my hopes of Heaven! We loved each other as man and woman seldom love in this world," replied Elverton,

in a hollow voice; "we severed, and until the judgment day it may never be known why."

"You loved each other so devotedly; you married publicly with the blessings of all your friends; you came hither to your beautiful home, and in one month, in the very perfection of your happiness, your union was shattered as by a thunderbolt from Heaven. You parted; oh, my father, was that well?"

"It was well!" he answered, solemnly.

She looked into the stern sorrow of his face, and read there that, in the simple words of his reply, he had uttered some awful truth. Again her heart yearned towards her father with inextinguishable love. She extended her arms and advanced towards him with imploring looks. But he waved her off, saying, in pitying tones:

"Come, no nearer, unhappy girl! Between you and me there is a great gulf fixed. Hark! Some one approaches! I must leave you now! Good night—nay, stop one moment! I must see you again at this hour to-morrow. In the meantime, drop no hint of my presence in England."

"None; I will keep your secret, my father," replied Alma, as Hollis Elverton, waving adieu, disappeared in the coverts of the woods.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

"Now father and child have met at last,
Met—as they never had met before;
Between them the spectre of the past
Stands—a barrier for evermore."

PLEASED, pained and perplexed at once, Alma stood transfixed where Elverton had left her.

She had seen her father! her father, whose sudden flight, mysterious wanderings, and unknown fate, had been the great subject of wonder, speculation and conjecture to her own self, to the family and to the community.

She had seen her father, actually seen him in the flesh, and spoken with him face to face! There in that spot he had stood before her, intercepting the last rays of the setting sun as it sank below the horizon. They had not embraced, or kissed, or even taken each other's hands—they had met as souls may meet on the confines of another world. And now he was gone like a vanished spirit.

She had met her father, and though the shock of that meeting, with its conflicting emotions of great surprise, deep joy, and bitter disappointment, had impressed her senses as forcibly as any actual event could possibly impress any human being, yet now the whole affair seemed to her so like a dream that she almost doubted its reality.

The meeting so sudden and unexpected; the interview so short and unsatisfactory; the consequences so uncertain and alarming; these subjects engrossed her thoughts, absorbed her senses, and riveted her to the spot, so that she did not move until the brushwood near her broke sharply beneath the tread of the intruder whose distant appearance had driven away her father.

Then she started as from sleep, looked up, and flushed with joy, for she thought the new comer would be Norham Montrose.

Alack! he was only old Davy Denny, the head-gardener, returning from one of his occasional inspections of the woods.

The old man cast a curious, anxious, sorrowful glance at his young lady as he touched his hat in passing her.

Alma blushed at meeting that glance, which said, as plainly as eyes could speak:

"Please, Miss Elverton, it is too late for you to be out walking alone in the woods, and if I only dared to speak, I'd up and tell you so."

And the old servant went slowly, sadly, and reluctantly up towards the mansion-house.

Alma felt no disposition to follow his footsteps, but turned and wandered still farther down the slope of the hill into the narrow valley below, where the woods were thickest.

She had nearly reached the foot of the hill, when the figure of a man suddenly crossed her path.

Looking up with a start, she recognized Hollis Elverton.

"My father! back!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, Alma, back; I have not been far from you since we parted. I left you intending to return to my present retreat. But from the covert of the trees that concealed me I saw old David Denny pass, and saw you, instead of going home, as I expected you to do, and as you should have done, child, turn and ramble down the hill. I then took a shorter path to meet you here, to complete the interview that was interrupted, and under the shadow of the coming night see you safe within the lawn of your own dwelling," said Hollis Elverton gravely.

"Oh, my dear father! how glad I am that I did not go home. Oh, if you knew how happy it makes me to see you

again, even after this short interval, you would indeed love me a little," said his daughter, fervently.

"Peace, girl, peace! No more of that, if you would ever look upon my face again! I have sought you, Alma, with a purpose. Sit down, while I unfold it to you. Sit down, I say, since you cannot stand," said Mr. Elverton, pointing to the trunk of a felled tree that lay across their path, and upon which Alma immediately sank.

Mr. Elverton stood at a short distance, with his arms folded, leaning against an oak.

"You know something of this wholesale poisoning at Allworth Abbey?" he began.

"Oh, yes, sir," answered Alma, shuddering.

"How much do you know?"

"As much as has been made public through the coroner's inquest."

"And that—is nothing—worse than nothing, since it is a tissue of false deductions! What opinion have you formed from the facts elicited by the coroner's inquest?"

"Sir, I can not form any."

"What do you think of the guilt or innocence of the accused girl, Eudora Leaton?"

"Oh, sir, I dare not think of that at all, the subject is so painful to me—"

"You think her guilty then?"

"I would to Heaven that I could believe her innocent, for I loved her. Oh, my father, she always looked kindly toward me, and in my loneliness I loved her," said Alma, in a broken voice.

"Believe her innocent, then, for she is so," said Hollis Elverton, with solemn earnestness.

"Oh, my dear father! Is this really true? Is my poor Eudora innocent? Oh, prove that her soul is guiltless of this great crime, and I shall not break my heart—no—not even if she dies for it!" cried Alma, starting up, seizing his hand, and gazing eagerly into his face.

It was the first time their hands had met; and Hollis Elverton shudderingly shook off her grasp, as he answered:

"Yes, it is true."

"Are you sure of it?"

"As sure of it as I can be of anything on earth."

"How do you know it? What do you know of it?"

"I know that Eudora Leaton is innocent, and I know who is guilty."

"Oh, my father! can you prove this? will you prove this?"

"Ah! Alma, moral certainty is not legal evidence! I repeat, I know Eudora Leaton to be innocent, and I know who is guilty; but I have no means as yet to prove the guilt of the one or the innocence of the other. But, Alma, you are the well-wisher of the accused girl?"

"Oh, yes; oh, yes."

"And you will take my word for her innocence?"

"Oh, yes! it is easy to have faith in what we wish to believe."

"Then you must become my agent in doing all that may be done for this most innocent, injured, and unhappy girl."

"Willingly, my father."

"Listen, then:—Although Eudora Leaton is heiress to one of the largest estates in this county, yet, being a minor, and a ward in chancery, I doubt she is without ready money to retain proper counsel for her defence; and her only friend, her affianced husband, Mr. Malcolm Montrose, is, I fear, as poor as herself, having nothing but a small income from his Highland place. And it is highly desirable that she should have the very best counsel to be procured for money; for it is said that the Attorney-General himself will come from London to conduct this very important case. Therefore, Alma, as I have a vital interest in the acquittal of this innocent girl, and the conviction, if possible, of the guilty person, I must intrust you with this

money. Take it, and find means to-morrow to place it either in the hands of Malcolm Montrose, or in those of Eudora Leaton; and say to either with whom you may leave it, that it is furnished by a friend who believes in her innocence, and that it is intended to be devoted to her defence," said Hollis Elverton, placing bank notes for a very large amount in Alma's hands.

"I will take it to Miss Leaton herself, dear father; I can do so very well, as no one ever inquires how I spend my days."

"Poor girl! so much greater the need that you should learn to govern yourself, since there is none to govern you. But do my errand to Eudora Leaton. Tell her to keep up her spirits, hope for the best, and trust in God! Tell her that she has her own consciousness of innocence to support her, one unknown friend working for her, and a just Providence watching over her!"

"I will faithfully deliver your message, my father."

"But not as coming from me! Remember, girl, you are never to breathe my name, or hint my existence to anyone whomsoever! All the world but you believe me dead; leave them in that illusion."

"Dear father, pardon me, but the illusion is yours. The world does not believe you dead. There was a report of your death, and an anonymous letter reached us from St. Petersburg announcing the supposed fact; but after the most careful investigation, my mother came to the conclusion that it was some one else of the same or a similar name, and——"

"She was happier for the hope that it might be true, however, as I intended that she should be," said Hollis Elverton, gravely.

Alma did not reply to this strange observation. She could not bear to acknowledge that her mother had been happier for this hope.

"But the *ruse* did not fully succeed, since it did not con-

vince her of my decease; since the death of H. Elverton, the American stranger, who died at St. Petersburg did not pass quite current with her for mine. Nevertheless, she is the better for the hope that, after all, it may be mine. Leave her to the enjoyment of that saving hope, which must strengthen every year until it becomes a certainty?"

"Oh, my father," said Alma, bowing her burning face upon her hands, while the tears stole through her fingers, "these cruel words pierce my heart like daggers. You say you loved each other as man and woman seldom love, and that you severed without a fault on either side. Oh, why then, even if you must be parted, why should you wish her to believe you dead—and why should she be happier in that belief? Would *you* be happier if she were dead?"

"I should; for it would be well, Alma."

"And if I, also, were dead?"

"It would be better, still, Alma!"

"And if you were?"

"Best of all!"

"Oh, this is fearful! I remember, too, overhearing it said that, when in childhood, I was ill, and in great danger, my mother's mournful face was lighted up as by a wild hope; but that when I recovered and got well, it sank back to its habitual look of dull despair! Oh, this is dreadful! Why is it that the life of each one of us is a curse to the others, or that the death of either would be a blessing to the rest?" cried Alma, wildly.

"Because a living sorrow is far harder to bear than a dead one! because we are each of us a living sorrow to the others?" said Hollis Elverton, gloomily.

"Oh! this is terrible! But why is it best that we *all* should die—I in my youth, you and her in your prime of life, prematurely as though we were not fit to cumber the earth?"

"Because we *are not* fit to cumber the earth—the dust should hide us!" cried Hollis Elverton, with such a sudden change of voice and manner, such a savage energy of tone

and gesture, such a fierce gathering of the brows, glare of the eyes, and writhing of the lips, that his daughter, looking up at him, suddenly shrieked aloud, and covered her face with her hands, for she feared she was in the presence of a madman, if not even in the power of a demoniac.

"Alma," he continued, sternly and pitilessly, in despite of her condition, "this horrifies you; yet, though the words should kill you, I repeat them—it is better that we should die, and return to dust!"

"He wishes indeed to kill me when he uses such awful words," thought the shuddering girl, as she shrank more and more into herself, and cowered nearer and nearer to the ground.

"Alma, there is a misfortune so unnatural that it has been forever nameless in all languages; so degrading that it infects with a worse than moral leprosy all connected with it; so fatal, that nothing but the death of the victim can cure it; nothing but the resolution of the body into its original elements, and its resurrection in another form of being, and into another sphere of life can regenerate it! Alma, such a dire misfortune was mine, and hers, and yours!"

"Oh, this is horrible—most horrible! But what is it, then? Give the fatality some name," cried Alma, distractedly.

"I told you it was nameless, but not cureless; for death is the certain remedy. Therefore, die, Alma, die!"

"Father, I am called a Christian, though most unworthy of the name; and nothing on earth would induce me to cast away my Maker's gift of life."

"Nor do I mean that, either! For though hoping, longing, praying for our deaths, I would not lay sacrilegious hands on my life, hers, or yours; for murder and suicide are crimes of the deepest dye, and I would not burden my soul with even a venial sin; yet, Alma, die if you can!"

"Oh, Heaven! I do not know what you mean, my father."

"Why, this. If ever you are ill again, do not call in a physician, do not take medicine, do not use any means to keep off the death that may come to you naturally, easily, kindly, as an angel of mercy. Promise me this."

"No, my father, I cannot. For not only does my conscience forbid me to destroy my own life, but it commands me to do all I can to preserve it; and I would no more be guilty of negative than of positive suicide," said Alma, firmly, though mournfully.

"Then life, worse than death, must be on your head! You are warned! But remember, you who prize this earthly life so highly, do not deprive your mother of the comfort she finds in the supposition of my death by the remotest hint of my existence," reiterated Hollis Elverton, earnestly.

"Father, you have my promise, and you may rely upon it. But, sir, there is one of whom neither you nor I have yet spoken, one whom we should both consider—one, indeed, who is much to be pitied in his widowed, childless and desolate old age. I mean your aged parent, my grandfather, Lord Elverton. Surely he at least would rejoice to hear that his only son still lives! and if necessary, he would keep your counsel as faithfully as I shall. Will you not communicate with him and comfort his aged heart with the news of your continued life?"

"NEVER!" broke forth Hollis Elverton, in a fury, that again frightened his gentle daughter almost into a swoon. "I have no father; I know nothing of your grandfather! and never, in this world, in Hades, or in Heaven, will I see, speak to, or acknowledge Lord Elverton again! Never! so save me, Heaven, in my utmost strait!"

"Oh, sir, he is your father! do not speak of him so bitterly!" faltered Alma.

"Girl! I told you a few moments since that there were misfortunes so monstrous as to be nameless; so shameful as to be contagious; so fatal as to be cureless except by death! and now I add to that, there are sins so great as to

burst asunder all ties of kindred, destroy all the sympathies of humanity, and invalidate all obligations of duty! Ask me no more questions, for I find that you are willing the very spirit from my bosom! but answer me this: since the fatal night that drove me from my home forever, has that old man ever ventured to cross the threshold of Edenlawn?"

"But once, my father; but once, as I truly believe. I have never seen him there, but I heard that, within a few weeks after your flight and my birth, he came to Edenlawn late one afternoon, and was closeted with my mother in the library for an hour, at the end of which he came out, and without taking any refreshment—"

"Ha! a morsel swallowed in that house must have choked him!" interrupted Elverton.

"Or even looking at his poor little grand-daughter—"

"The sight of her must have blasted him, as that of the Medusa's head was said to blast those who dared to look upon it," again burst forth Elverton.

"He hastened from the house, which he has never entered since."

"For he had better walk on red-hot plough-shares than tread the paving-stones of those halls!" exclaimed Elverton, fiercely.

Then, after a few minutes' silence, he inquired:

"What have you heard of him since?"

"Nothing, my father, except this significant fact, that, within one fortnight after his fatal visit, his nut-brown hair turned as white as snow!"

"No doubt, no doubt, but will his scarlet sin ever be so white?—can time or sorrow or repentance bleach that?" muttered Elverton, speaking rather to himself than to his daughter.

Alma did not at once reply; a feeling of deep humiliation kept her silent for awhile, and then a sense of religious duty urged her at last to say:

"I know not of what sin you speak, my father: but this

I have—Scripture warrant for believing that, though the sin be 'as scarlet,' it may be made, by repentance, as 'white as snow.'

"Let him settle it with Heaven then, as he must ere very long! but as for *me*—let me never see his face again! Come, child, our interview is over. Arise and walk on; I will follow you until I see you in sight of the north gate, and then leave you," said Hollis Elverton, stepping aside to give her the path and then going after her.

They went up the narrow wooded path in silence. When they reached the top of the hill, and came in sight of the north gate, Mr. Elverton paused, and said:

"I need go no further; hurry home; but meet me here an hour earlier than this to-morrow evening. Good night."

"Good night, my father," said Alma, extending her hands imploringly towards him.

But he shook his head, waved his hand, plunged into the wood, and was soon lost to her view.

She looked wistfully after him for a little while, and then turned slowly, and with downcast eyes, to walk towards the house.

The full moon was shining broadly on her path, when suddenly its light was intercepted.

Alma raised her eyes to see the tall, dark figure of Captain Montrose standing before her, with folded arms, frowning brows, and scornful lips.

We have observed before this that Norham Montrose, in mould of form and cast of features, was the very counterpart of his elder brother, but in every other respect he was as different from him as the night from the day. Malcolm, it may be remembered, was as fair as a Dane, with light hair, blue eyes, and a sanguine complexion; he was also frank, generous, and confiding. Norham, on the contrary, was as dark as a Spaniard, with raven-black hair and burning black eyes; he was, besides, reserved, jealous, and suspicious.

Alma, conscious of these darker traits in his character,

fearing their effects upon himself and her, yet loving him despite of danger, shivered with the presentiment of coming evil when she saw him standing before her so silent, still, and stern.

"Norham," she faltered faintly.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Elverton; I hope I have not prematurely interrupted a pleasant *tête-a-tête*," he replied, sarcastically, his black eyes flashing and his proud lip curling.

Alma understood all now. He had seen her father walking with her in the wood, and had mistaken Hollis Elverton for a favored suitor. And Alma, bound by her promise, dared not explain the circumstance, and under such conditions could not hope to re-assure her jealous lover. A consciousness of her false position bowed her fair head upon her bosom, dyed her delicate cheek with blushes, and invested her whole manner with the appearance of conscious guilt. Her heart sank within her bosom, and she could not reply.

He looked at her for a moment in scorn and anger—the fierce scorn and anger of wounded love and jealousy, and then saying—"I will no longer intrude upon your privacy, Miss Elverton; good evening," he lifted his hat, turned upon his heel, and strode away.

"Stay, stay, Norham; do not leave me in a fatal error!" cried Alma, breaking the spell that had bound her faculties, and springing forward.

He paused and looked wistfully towards her for a moment, then strode back to her side, and answered, still very haughtily:

"I beg your pardon, Miss Elverton, if I have wronged you even in my thoughts, but our mutual relations assuredly warrant me in feeling some surprise and displeasure at finding you in these woods, walking with a strange man as you have so often walked with me, and certainly justify me in demanding some explanation of so strange a proceeding on your part."

"And because I have been so indiscreet as to wander

here with you, do you really suppose that I could be so faultless as to walk here with another?" said Alma, in a mournful voice.

"I have assuredly very good reason to think so," replied Norham, sarcastically.

"Yes, it is true; by coming here to meet you I have given you good reason for thinking me capable of any degree of indiscretion," said Alma, with sorrowful self-humiliation.

"Miss Elverton, I meant not that, as you know very well; I meant not to reproach you with your innocent rambles with me, your betrothed husband, who would die rather than offer you any offence. 'The good reason' which I have for thinking that you favor others is the evidence of my own senses. I *saw* you, Miss Elverton, walking here in close conversation with a stranger; and your answer appears to me very like a mere evasion of the explanation I must still demand," he said, haughtily, keeping his stern eyes fixed upon her face with the look of a man having authority to arraign her conduct.

What explanation could poor Alma give? How could she answer his doubts? How soothe his jealousy? She dropped her clasped hands, and moaned with distress.

"I wait your answer, Miss Elverton."

Alma wrung her hands and remained silent.

"When I was about to withdraw from your presence you recalled me; if not to volunteer the explanation that I seek, will you be kind enough to say for what other purpose?"

"Oh, Norham, be patient! do not misconceive me! I called you back to say to you that—that—"

"Well?"

"I came to the woods this afternoon in the hope of seeing you and speaking with you after so long an absence."

"And met instead the lover that consoled you during my absence; but of whom perhaps you are tired now—that was very awkward while you were expecting to see me.

Pray, Miss Elverton, have you given him also the promise of your hand as soon as you shall be of age and free to bestow it?" sneered the man.

"Oh, Norham! Norham! do not be so unjust to me! The person that I met this afternoon is no lover of mine; quite, quite the contrary! He is one who never could, under any possible circumstances, become one."

"And yet you were in very close confabulation when I first observed you. It really looked to me like an interview between very intimate friends."

"And yet, indeed, I never set eyes on that person in all my life before."

"You never set eyes on him before?" repeated Norham Montrose, in astonishment.

"On my word, on my honor, on my *soul*, no!" replied Alma, with vehement earnestness.

"Who was he then?" inquired Norham Montrose, as the dark scowl of jealousy vanished from his brow.

Alma hesitated, reflected a moment, and then answered:

"He was an elderly gentleman, not familiar with this part of the country, I believe."

"What was his name?"

"I did not ask his name, of course; and neither do I think that he told me; nay, indeed, I am sure that he did not."

"Or if he did, you have forgotten it, perhaps. But what was he, then?"

"I did not ask him that question either, nor did he volunteer the information."

"But from your own observation, what did you make of him?"

"An elderly gentleman, who seemed to be recently arrived in this neighborhood."

"And that was all?"

Alma bowed.

"Some tourist come to the North for the summer months,

and rambling over these hills in search of the picturesque," concluded Norham, in a tone of complete satisfaction.

Alma dropped her head, blushed deeply, and burst into tears of shame,

She had not spoken one word of falsehood, and yet her truthful replies had been so carefully worded as to deceive her lover, and Alma could not endure the thought of deception.

Norham Montrose mistook the cause of her emotion, and quick to repent as he had been to offend, he looked at her sweet suffering face for a moment, then approached, and dropped gently on his knee before her, and taking her hand, murmured :

"Dear Alma, I cannot bend too low to sue for your forgiveness; I have wronged and offended you by my mad jealousy. I have been unjust, unmanly. I am deeply grieved and mortified to think of it now. Alma, will you pardon me?"

"Dear Norham, I have nothing to pardon in you; but much, very much to thank and love you for. Please rise," she answered, in a gentle voice, as she closed her hand upon his, and tried to lift him up.

"I have been rude and violent to you, my gentle one."

"Only for a few moments, while for months and months you have been kind and loving."

"But I have wounded your delicacy, wrung your heart!"

"Well, when I have received so much good from you, shall I not receive a little necessary evil too? Can I have the rose of Love without its inevitable thorn of Jealousy? Pray rise."

"Gentlest of all gentle girls, I do indeed believe that it would be easier to wound than offend you, and far easier to wrong than to estrange your heart," said Norham, rising to his feet, and pressing her hand to his lips.

"It would indeed be most difficult for you to offend me,

and quite impossible to estrange me. For even if you were to cease to love me—"

She paused, and a deep blush overspread her face.

"My own heart must first cease to beat—nay, my own soul to exist, ere I cease to love you, Alma; for my love seems the most immortal element in my immortality! Do you not believe me?" said Norham, fervently.

"Yes, I do. And trust in me also, Norham; nor for *my* sake, for, as I said before, I am willing to take the pain with the joy, but for your own, dear Norham, for it must be so distressing to suspect one that you love. And oh, Norham! consider how little cause you have to doubt me. I am not as other young ladies who have many friends and relatives to love them. I have but you only in the wide, wide world! Did I ever tell you before, Norham, that I never in my life received a caress, a word, or a glance of affection from any human creature until I met you? My very soul seemed perishing in its solitude, when your sympathy and affection came to me as the dew and the sunshine to a fading flower. You loved me and won my love! You gave me new life! Oh, is it likely, is it even possible, that my heart should ever swerve in its allegiance to its life-giver?"

"I will never doubt you again! I was a wretch to have doubted you then! Dear one, I have been so occupied with my own selfish jealousy, that I have not even inquired—how have you been during the months of my long absence?"

"Just as always. Life passes with me in such monotony, that the changes of the weather are all that I know."

"While others, your nearest neighbors, have experienced such fearful vicissitudes of fortune that their daily lives have passed more like the successive acts in some dark tragedy, than scenes in a real existence! My uncle's family at Allworth Abbey! Oh, heaven, Alma! what a

fatality was there! The whole family swept from the face of the earth in a few short months!"

"Alas, yes; Oh, Norham, you must know how deeply I sympathize with you in this great sorrow! I should have said so before, but your own personal trouble engaged all my attention."

"My abominable jealousy, you should say; but let that pass. Alma, I was not as intimate as my brother Malcolm was with my uncle's family; and if they had all gone off in a natural way, by a visitation of Providence, as it is called, I should not have grieved more for them than men usually grieve for uncles, aunts and cousins. But to think that they should have been destroyed by a fiend in the shape of a girl—" said Norham, shuddering.

"Ah! to whom do you refer?" inquired Alma.

"To whom, but to that serpent whom they warmed at their hearth-stone until she had life enough to sting them to death! To whom but to that Indian cobra, Eudora Leaton? Eudora Leaton, a name destined to become notorious with those of Borgia, Brinvilliers and Lafarge!"

"You feel certain of her guilt, then?"

"Certain? Yes! Would it were not so! would that there were a rational doubt of it! For if there were I should dare to hope that, though the old House should become extinct, it need not die in blood and shame!" said Norham Montrose, bitterly.

"Then why not entertain that hope! There is nothing but circumstantial evidence against Eudora Leaton, and such evidence is proverbially fallacious."

"It cannot be in this case. The evidence is complete, conclusive, convicting! No one can doubt that the issue of her trial will be condemnation to death. And all that I have left to hope is, that the last Leaton of Allworth will have the grace to die by her own hand in the prison, rather than become a spectacle to the gaping crowd."

"But, Norham, *I* do not think that she is guilty, and I

pray and hope and trust that she may be proved innocent, as from my soul I believe her to be!"

"That is because you cannot conceive iniquity like hers, as Heaven forbid you should, sweet saint! And now, dear Alma, you must leave me, and go home immediately. In my selfish love, I have wronged you in keeping you out so late. And now, to atone for that injury, I must tell you something that, in your innocence, you would never find out yourself—something that will effectually arm you against me—"

"Then do not tell me at all! For if it is anything innocence could not of itself discover, be sure it is not worth discovering. And as to its arming me against you, dear Norham, I cannot consider you an enemy, and therefore do not wish to be armed."

"Yet, nevertheless, I will arm you with this knowledge of the world, which you may use, abuse, or neglect at your pleasure. Listen, then, dear Alma. Even these meetings that you accord me are so heterodox to all conventionality, that were they known they would seriously compromise your good name, and nothing, Alma, but our full sincerity of purpose to marry, as soon as you shall become of age, could justify these interviews. But, Alma, not even our betrothal will warrant you in remaining out here with me after sunset. Alma, I tell you this, that your own mother should have told you, because, dear one, I would not take the very least advantage of your inexperience. Therefore, dear Alma, never in future yield even to my persuasions to detain you out here after sunset. Thus, you see, while my better spirit is in the ascendant, I would warn you, arm you even against myself!"

"You are the soul of honor! If I had not known it before, I should know it now! Good night," said Alma, in a low voice.

"One more caution in parting, love! It is not usual, or even safe, for young ladies to talk with strangers whom

they may casually meet in their walks. Therefore, Alma, I must pray you that the scene of this afternoon may never be repeated, and entreat you to promise me never again to fall into conversation with any stranger whom you may meet in your rambles."

Norham Montrose paused and waited for her answer.

Alma hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"I promise you, Norham, never to hold conversation with any one in my walks except yourself, or some blood relation of my own, or some servant of our family. I think that my promise covers the whole ground!"

"It does, it does, dear Alma. Good night. Meet me here to-morrow afternoon, somewhat earlier than this—two hours earlier—at about six o'clock. Until then, good-bye, dearest Alma."

And before she could reply, or object to the hour named, he raised her hand to his lips, bowed, and disappeared in the depths of the woods.

She remained for an instant transfixed with consternation at the thought that he had unconsciously appointed for their next interview the very spot and the very hour at which she had promised to meet her father.

Her first impulse was to fly after Norham, call him back, and name another afternoon, but the fear of again arousing his jealous suspicions restrained her. A little reflection also convinced her that, though she might defer the meeting, she could not prevent Norham from haunting the wood to be near her. How to deliver herself from this dilemma, how to escape from the dangers that threatened her, Alma understood not.

If she rendered herself at the appointed time and place she would find herself confronted with her father and her lover.

If she broke her appointment and remained at home, Hollis Elverton and Norham Montrose, coming thither at

the same time to seek her, would be confronted with each other.

What, in any case, would be the result Alma feared to think.

Full of distress and perplexity, she turned her steps homeward.

She entered the house just as the hall-clock was striking eight.

"Mees Alma, I been seeking for you all over ze house. Miladie, your movver, desire you come to her direct," said old Madelon, meeting Miss Elverton at the foot of the great staircase.

"My mother! my mother sent for me! Are you very sure of this, Madelon?" inquired Alma, in great surprise, for she had never in her life before been summoned to her mother's presence.

"Vat sood make me no sure? Miladie tell me, 'Madelon, send Mees Elverton to me soon as she come in from her valk in de garden,'" said the old woman.

"Very well, Madelon; I will go to my mother directly," replied Alma, as, lost in astonishment, she hurried up the stairs towards those private apartments into which she had never in her life been admitted, and where she had never dared to intrude.

She paused before the door, and knocked softly.

The deep, rich, vibrating voice of the lady bade her enter.

Alma opened the door, crossed the enchanted threshold, and stood within the heretofore prohibited apartments

The room in which she found herself was one of the most lofty and spacious in the mansion. It was the front one of a magnificent suite of apartments, that had been splendidly fitted up for the first reception of Mrs. Elverton as a bride. It was situated directly over the drawing-room, and had a large bay-window that commanded a view of the terraced lawn and the beautiful lake. But that window

was now closed, and the room was lighted up for the night. It was sumptuously furnished. A Turkey carpet of the most brilliant colors covered the floor. The chiffoniers, stands, tables, chairs, and even all the frames and woodwork were of rosewood and gold, giving the *tout ensemble* a peculiarly rich effect. The coverings of the chairs, footstools and sofas were all of crimson satin and gold.

The curtains at the windows were also of crimson satin and gold, with inner hangings of fine lace. The walls were lined with splendid mirrors, reaching from ceiling to floor, and multiplying a hundred-fold the scenery of the room. The whole was brilliantly lighted up by a chandelier that hung from the centre of the ceiling.

In the midst of all this glitter of light and glow of color, in a luxurious chair, beside an elegant table, sat a lady, who, under any circumstances, or from any spectator, must at once have riveted the closest attention.

She was apparently about thirty-five years of age, of tall, justly-proportioned, stately figure, around which flowed the rich folds of a crimson velvet robe. Her features were of the purest classic type. Her complexion was deadly pale, in contrast with her large, dark eyes, jet-black eyebrows, and raven-black hair, that lay in heavy shining bands upon her marble cheeks.

"Come hither, Alma," she said, in that rich, deep, luscious voice which ever thrilled the bosom of all who heard it.

Alma approached and stood before her mother. Her heart beat fast; she eagerly hoped for some demonstration of affection on the part of the lady. Vain hope!

Mrs. Elverton took from the table beside her a sealed packet, and holding it in her hand while she spoke, she said:

"Alma, I have sent for you to entrust you with a secret mission, to which I think you will be faithful."

"Oh, mamma, how happy you make me by trusting me!

Oh, yes, I would be faithful unto death in any matter you should confide in me!" said Alma fervently.

"Enough. I believe you. To come to the point. I have just heard that that unhappy girl has been re-arrested and committed to prison. I have the strongest reasons for believing her to be innocent, though in great peril. These, my private reasons, it is not necessary to divulge, since they would have no weight with judge or jury. But I have the deepest interest in the acquittal of that girl, and in the discovery, if possible, of the real criminal. I fear that though a wealthy heiress, Eudora Leaton is without available funds to engage the best counsel, which is always very expensive. Therefore, Alma, I wish you, to-morrow morning, to take the close carriage, drive over to the prison, and place this packet in Eudora Leaton's hands. Tell her it is to be used in her defence, and is sent by one who has as deep a stake in her trial as she has herself. But do not tell her from whom it came. Do you understand me?" said the lady, placing the package in the hands of her daughter.

"Yes mamma, and I will faithfully do your errand."

"Go, then."

"Mamma, will you not embrace me for this once in our lives?" pleaded Alma, holding out her arms.

"Go! go! go! go, girl, and leave me. Is this the advantage you would take of the very first visit I permit you to my presence?" exclaimed the lady, excitedly.

"Mamma, pardon me, I go; good night," said Alma, resignedly, as she withdrew from the splendid misery of her mother's private apartments.

She retired to her own chamber, full of wonder that her parents should be unconsciously so unanimous in their anxiety for Eudora Leaton's acquittal, and that she should be the confidant of this unsuspected unanimity.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### "TRUST IN HEAVEN."

"Dearest hopes and joys may perish—
Lost in an hour;
All the love the heart can cherish
May lose its power!
But when the storms gather o'er thee
Do not despair,
Heaven can ever joy restore thee
Still pure and fair."

EARLY in the morning Eudora arose from her sleepless bed. With the aid of the rude basin and jug of water and coarse towel that had been placed on the rough deal stand by Mrs. Barton the night previous, Eudora made her simple toilet.

And next, with the love of order and neatness which characterizes every true woman under all the circumstances of life, she made up the little bed and arranged the narrow cell. But oh! with what a heavy, aching heart, and what an ever present sense of the awful danger before her!

Finally, she knelt and offered up her usual morning prayers, and then sat down, in forced idleness, to endure the dull pain of merely living on.

She had not sat long thus, before the little square opening at the top of her door was darkened by the face of the female warder, and the next instant Mrs. Barton unlocked the door and entered the cell, saying:

"I peeped in first to see if you were asleep, for if you had been, Miss, it isn't I as would ha' disturbed you; seeing as sleep is such a blessing to them as is in trouble, it is a'most a sin to wake 'em. But laws, Miss, you needn't ha' took the pains to do the cell yourself, 'cause I could ha' done it."

"I thank you, it cost me little pains; besides, occupation is almost as great a blessing as sleep to persons in my unhappy circumstances," replied Eudora.

"And that's true, too; I know by myself! for well I remember when my two poor sailor-lads were lost in the Great Western steamship as went down with all on board —and I a lone widder-woman—I should ha' just gone raving mad, if so be I hadn't been obliged to work so hard all day that I slept sound all night. And so, between hard work and sound sleep, I lived through it."

"Is your post such a hard one?" inquired the poor young prisoner, taking an immediate interest in the kind-hearted, childless widow.

"Laws, no, Miss, but I wasn't here then, no, nor for a year afterwards. Bless you, Miss, I was in the laundry line o' business; but being of one of your grandfather, the *old* Lord Leaton's tenants, your father, Mr. Charles, took pity on me, and spoke to Mr. Anderson, as was under obligations to him, to give me this place. It isn't no ways hard on *me*, whatsoever it may be to them as I have to 'tend to. But it's been a teaching to me, Miss, for since here I've been, I've seen other people in so much deeper sorrow than any that mere death can cause, that I ha' been ashamed to grieve out of reason for my own troubles, and I ha' thought, i' the name o' the Lord, it wer' perhaps all for the best, for if my poor fatherless lads had lived, they might ha' been led wrong and brought here, and that would ha' killed me outright!—I beg your pardon, Miss!" said the woman, suddenly stopping and reddening at the thought of the unkindness of speech into which her thoughts had hurried her, "I beg your pardon, for I know that some come here without deserving it."

"And I came here without any fault of mine! Oh, believe it! You knew and honored my father! Oh, for his sake believe that his only child did not—could not—commit the dreadful crimes falsely charged upon her!"

said Eudora, earnestly, clasping her hands, and throwing her glance, full of impassioned truthfulness, up to the woman's face.

"And 'spite of the evidence, I don't think you did, Miss; for being of your father's daughter, it don't stand to reason as you could."

"It was all because I was the sole attendant of—"

"Miss, Miss, you mustn't talk of your business to me nor to anyone else, except your lawyer, for fear o' letting out something as might be brought against you on your trial," interrupted Mrs. Barton.

"What, not to you, who were my father's friend, and are mine?" asked Eudora, in surprise.

"No, Miss, 'cause how do I know! they might even pull me up for a witness; best be cautious."

"But I am guiltless, and being so, how can I say anything to injure my cause?"

"I dunnot know, Miss; but they do tell as how you let out many things afore the Squire as had better been kept in."

"I spoke only the truth of what I had done; and I had done only what was right. The whole world was welcome to know it, and I do not see how it could hurt me."

"Yes, Miss, but then the best of truth do get so turned upside down and wrong side out by them lawyers, as you couldn't tell it from the worst of falsehoods; and so, if so be you can't say anything to clear yourself, best keep a still tongue in your head. But depend upon this, Miss—as Sarah Barton will do everything she lawfully can do to help and comfort your father's daughter."

"I thank you from a full heart! Oh, my dear father! little did you think, in providing for a poor widow, you were raising up a friend for your unhappy daughter in her bitterest extremity!" exclaimed Eudora, with emotion, as she grasped the hard hand of the woman.

"The ways of Providence are strange," said the good woman, musingly.

"They are," echoed poor Eudora, thinking of the strange fate that had cast her into prison.

"And now, Miss, as the gov'ner's family are about to sit down to breakfast, I will go and bring yours from his own table, same as I brought your supper."

"Are all the prisoners supplied from the governor's table?"

"Lawk, no, Miss! quite the reverse! You didn't happen to think the prisoners all got lamb chop and port wine for their supper, such as I brought you last night?"

"Why, no, and that was the reason why I asked you. But do all the women, then?"

"Lawk, no, Miss! quite the reverse, as I said before."

"Then, why am I so supplied?"

"Why, Miss, you see, it's a—it's another affair altogether with you."

"Then understand that I want no privilege that is not shared by the humblest of my fellow prisoners—no favor, in short."

"Well, Miss, for the matter of that, it is not an unlawful privilege, seeing as how the gov'ner sartinly has the right to send meals from his own table to any one he likes—and as for favor, Miss, it's a favor for you to accept any lawful services as he is free to render you, seeing as how he is under such everlasting obligations to you and your'n as he can never repay."

"Not to me—not to me—I never saw or heard of the man before I was brought hither."

"Well, to your honored father, then! And though the old saying says that 'favor is no inheritance,' I say it ought to be! And so the best service as Mr. Anderson can do you won't be too much for your father's daughter."

"Think as you will about that; but I had rather not fare better than my fellow-sufferers."

"Neither will you, Miss, though you should have better than the best as the gov'ner's house could afford."

"I do not understand you," said Eudora, in surprise.

"Harry come up! I'll explain!" answered the woman. "You must know that the best Master Anderson can send you is not half so good as what you have been used to; and the worst prison fare as is sent to the others is a deal better than ever they've had outside. Consequently, all things considered, you fare worse, and not better than the rest," said Mrs. Barton, triumphantly.

"Your ingenious sophistry does not convince me."

"Then I'll tell you what must—the gov'ner's orders; and he—under the higher authorities, you know—is paramount here. He commands me to serve you from the best upon his own table, and I must obey."

"Just as you please; I thank you both; but it really makes no difference to me what I eat or drink," said Eudora, dejectedly.

"Reckon it would, though, if you knew what sort of food we sarve out to the others," thought Mrs Barton as she left the cell and locked the door after her.

The grating of that lock! How it always jarred upon the nerves of the sensitive girl! After an absence of about fifteen minutes, Mrs. Barton returned, bearing a tray upon which was neatly arranged a breakfast of coffee, toast, ham, and poached eggs.

Nature! wise mother!—you never suffer any degree of mental anguish to utterly destroy the appetite of the young. A minute before the entrance of the tray the hapless girl thought she could not eat; but a minute after, the savory smell of the well-chosen breakfast assailed her senses, creating hunger, notwithstanding all her grief, anxiety, and terror. The gossip of the good-natured Mrs. Barton seasoned the repast; and at the end of half-an-hour our poor Eudora had made a good and refreshing meal, for which she felt all the better.

"And now, then, what can I bring you to pass away the time with, until some of your friends call?" said Mrs. Barton.

"A pocket-Bible if you please; nothing more."

"But lor', Miss, that's very solemn sort of study for week-a-days; hadn't you better have something funny, as would liven you up like?"

"There are times when no book but *the one* can be read," said Eudora.

"Very well, Miss; to be sure you shall have it," replied the woman, taking the tray and retiring.

An hour afterward, while Eudora was engaged in seeking to draw comfort and strength from the pages of the blessed volume, the cell-door was opened and a veiled lady was ushered in by Miss Barton, who immediately re-locked the door and withdrew.

Eudora arose in surprise to receive this unexpected visitor.

The lady threw aside her veil, and revealed the features of Alma Elverton.

"Miss Elverton! Is it possible! You here?" exclaimed Eudora, in astonishment.

"Yes, dear; but why do you speak to me so formally? Why do you not call me Alma, as you used to do?" inquired the visitor, taking the hand and kissing the cheek of the prisoner.

"Why? Oh, that was so long ago!" sighed Eudora.

"But two weeks."

"No longer? It seems an age; but then so many things have happened since."

"None that can estrange us, I hope, Eudora?"

"You think me innocent, then?"

"Yes," replied the visitor, seating herself on the side of the cot-bed.

"And so you come to see me. Oh, that is very good in you."

"I come also to serve you. I come as the messenger of

two friends, who wish for the present to remain unknown, but who feel such a personal interest in your acquittal that they send you this sum of money, and beg that you will accept it as a loan, to be devoted to the purpose of feeing counsel for your defence," said Alma, placing the roll of bank-notes in her hand.

"But this is very strange," remarked Eudora, hesitating to retain the money.

"And is not your presence in this place very strange? And is not everything that has happened to you for the last two weeks equally strange?"

"Oh, yes, yes; so strange that it sometimes seems to me to be unreal; as though I were dead and sleeping in my grave, and dreaming this dreadful dream," replied Eudora, with a shudder.

"Then take one incident of the dream with another."

"But this money? I may never be able to repay it."

"Then repayment will never be demanded. Those who have sent you the funds direct me to say that they have a personal and strictly selfish interest in your acquittal as well as in the apprehension of the real criminal."

"Thank Heaven that there are some, at least, who believe me free from this great sin!"

"There are many; but as the mere belief in your innocence would do you but little good with judge or jury, it is necessary that they assist you in every practical way."

"But who are those friends that have sent me this assistance?"

"I must not tell more than I have already told—that they are those who have a deep interest in the acquittal of the innocent and the crimination of the guilty."

"But what sort of an interest?"

"I may not tell you more than that it is of so selfish a nature as to justify you in accepting all the assistance they can render you for their own sakes without feeling under any obligation to them whatever."

"That will be difficult—indeed, impossible; for I must feel very, very grateful to these unknown benefactors," said Eudora, no longer refusing the gift, but accepting it with mixed feelings of gratitude and humiliation.

Alma would have remained longer, but the footsteps of several persons were heard approaching, and the door was unlocked, and Mr. Montrose, accompanied by a strange gentleman, was ushered in by the gaoler.

Alma hastily kissed Eudora, bade her be of good cheer, dropped her thick veil over her face, and hurried from the cell, to return home, and keep her dangerous appointment with her father.

"Miss Leaton, I have brought down Mr. Fenton, who is here to consult with us upon your case," said Mr. Montrose, presenting the lawyer.

The lawyer bowed, and the lady courtesied, just as if the introduction had taken place in the drawing-room.

Eudora took her seat upon the side of the cot, and offered the stranger the only chair, which he took. Malcolm Montrose seated himself upon the little table, and the consultation began.

"This is Wednesday. The assizes open on Monday. Can you procure us a copy of the docket, my good friend?" said Mr. Fenton, addressing the governor, who lingered at the door.

"I think I can, sir," replied that officer, hurrying away for the purpose. He returned in a short time, bringing with him the required document, which he placed in the hands of the lawyer.

"'Queen *versus* Goffe, poaching;' 'Queen *versus* Hetton, assault, &c.' 'Queen—um—um—um,'" read the lawyer, running his eyes down the list, until he came to a line where he exclaimed:

"Here we are the seventh case on the docket—'Queen *versus* Leaton.' The cases that precede ours are trifling, and will soon be disposed of. Ours will come on, I should

judge, about Wednesday morning—this day week; so there is a plenty of time to prepare the defence. Have you a copy of the evidence given at the coroner's inquest?" said the lawyer, turning to Mr. Montrose.

Malcolm drew from his pocket two papers, and handing them to Mr. Fenton, said:

"Here, in this first paper, is the report of the inquest that sat upon the body of Lord Leaton, and in this second the report of the one that sat upon those of Lady Leaton and Miss Leaton."

"Yes," said the lawyer, taking them, and settling himself to their careful perusal."

In the course of his reading he marked three or four points, and at its close he turned to his fair client, and said:

"You are aware, I hope, Miss Leaton, that you should be perfectly frank with me, and that you can be so with perfect safety. In a word, it is absolutely indispensable that a client should be as candid with her counsel as a patient is with her physician."

"Yes, I am aware of that; but really I have nothing to tell you, but that I am wholly innocent of the dreadful crimes they impute to me."

"I have made several notes here upon items of evidence that may be used in our defence, and about which I wish to question you. In the first place, then, in the evidence given by Lady Leaton before the first coroner's inquest, her ladyship testified that on the same night of her husband's sudden death, while the sleeping-draught stood on the stand beside his bed, she being in her adjoining dressing-room, with the communicating door open between them, heard the rustle of a woman's silk dress moving about, and saw the shadow of a woman's form gliding along the wall of her husband's chamber. In the second place, the testimony of the late Agatha Leaton proves that this unknown intruder could not have been yourself, as

you were at that very hour engaged in reading to her in her own private apartment. Consequently, the midnight intruder who stole secretly into Lord Leaton's room, and dropped the fatal drug into the sleeping-draught, must have been some other woman. Suspicion seems to have fallen on no one else; but have not you, in your private thought, some idea as to who this midnight poisoner really was?"

"Not the remotest in the world," replied Eudora, in astonishment at the question.

"Humph—take time—reflect."

"I have reflected, sir, but without effect."

"Again, then," said the lawyer, referring to his notes; "in your own evidence given before the second inquest you testify that on the night of your cousin's sudden death, while watching beside her sick-bed, you lost yourself in light slumber for a moment, but was almost immediately awakened by the impression of some strange presence in the room, and that, in the momentary interval between sleeping and waking, you saw, or dreamed you saw, a dark-robed female figure glide through the room and disappear in the communicating one; but that on arousing yourself, and searching that room and the adjoining one, you found no trace of an intruder. Now, what I wish to ask you is, whether you believe that you really saw anyone in the sick-chamber at that hour or not?"

"I was so shocked and terrified, and grieved by the sudden death of my cousin, that I could not then speak definitely as to whether I really saw or only dreamed of that figure in the room; because the scene passed on the instant of my waking up, and while my faculties were bewildered by slumber. But since that night, every time I have thought of that strange incident in my watch, I have become more and more firmly convinced that what I saw was reality."

"In a word, that there was a woman in Miss Leaton's room that night?"

"Yes, I earnestly believe that there was."

"And that this woman dropped the poison into the cooling drink prepared for Miss Leaton?"

"Indeed I fear so; for when I saw the figure it was gliding away from the mantelpiece where the jug of tamarind-water stood, towards the door that opened into my own little room."

"And might not that woman have put the poison into your drawers? And may we not in that way account for its presence there?"

Eudora started violently, and turned deadly pale. The idea of such a depth of wickedness never before had been presented to her mind; and now it seemed to crush the very soul from her body.

"Because my theory of the case is, that the secret poisoner took measures effectually to conceal her own crime and to fix it upon you. And that is also the scheme of our defence."

"Oh, Heaven of heavens! can a human being – can a *demon* be so atrociously wicked!" gasped Eudora, in a suffocating voice.

"Yes; a woman can be so. But reflect, and tell me, have you no possible suspicion as to who this woman might have been?"

"No; I have not the remotest idea."

"Well; in the first place, it must have been the same woman whose shadow was seen by Lady Leaton on the wall of Lord Leaton's chamber on the night of his sudden death."

"You think, then, that Lady Leaton's impression of having seen such a figure was correct?"

"I think so. Now, reflect once more, and tell me if you have no clue to the identity of this woman?"

"Can nothing be done to ascertain who that woman is, if really guilty, and fix the guilt upon her?" inquired Malcolm.

"Yes, much. But the first and most important thing to be done is to keep perfectly silent regarding our suspicions, so that she may not be put upon her guard. The next thing is to engage the services of two or three experienced detectives, but that will be expensive."

Malcolm's face clouded at the remembrance of his limited resources.

But Eudora placed her roll of bank-notes in the lawyer's hands, and said:

"Pray take from that parcel as much as may be needed for this service, and hand over the remainder to Mr. Montrose."

The lawyer drew out two fifty pound notes, and handed the balance to the astonished Malcolm.

As that was not the proper time to tell the story of this mysterious loan, Eudora merely looked at Malcolm and smiled, for now she *could* smile, as the presence of the lawyer who came to defend her cheered her spirits and raised her hopes, even as the face of the physician who appears to cure animates and revives the sinking and dying patient.

The consultation was continued a little longer, and then the lawyer gathered up his documents and withdrew to prepare his defence.

On taking leave, Malcolm found an opportunity of lingering behind for a moment to look the question that he would not ask.

"Yes, the money was brought me by Alma Elverton, whom you must have noticed here as you came in, though she immediately lowered her veil, and withdrew," said Eudora, replying to this mute inquiry just as directly as though it had been made in words.

"I noticed a lady pass out, but did not recognize her as Miss Elverton. And so it was Alma who lent us the money?"

"No; she was acting as the agent of those whose

names she was forbidden to mention, but who professed to have a personal and even selfish interest in the acquittal of the innocent and the crimination of the guilty. Was I right to accept this loan?"

"Perfectly. It was a godsend! but we must find out, if possible, who are your benefactors. The knowledge may be of the greatest use in your defence. And here is another piece of service to be rendered by our detectives," said Malcolm. Then, knowing that he must not linger longer, he pressed the hand of his betrothed, and said:

"Farewell for the present, my dear Eudora. I will return and visit you as often as I may be permitted to do so. In the meanwhile, may God be with you."

And so saying, he released her hand, and followed the lawyer from the cell.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE FEARFUL SECRET.

"Our actions travel and are veiled; and yet
We sometimes catch a fearful glimpse of one
When out of sight its march hath well nigh gone,
An unveiled thing which we can ne'er forget!
All sins it gathers up into its course,
As they do grow with it, and its force,
One day with busy speed that thing shall come,
Recoiling on the heart that was its home."

It was late in the afternoon when Alma Elverton, returning from the prison, reached Edenlawn.

Not daring to present herself unsummoned before her stern mother, she went direct to her own chamber, threw off her bonnet and mantle, and then rang for her attendant.

Old Madelon, in her hight French *bonne's* cap made her appearance.

"Will you go to my mamma, Madelon, and tell her that I have returned from my ride, and ask her to say whether I shall come to her?" said Alma.

"I vill go, Meess Elverton, but miladie is—is more—vat sall I say?" said the *bonne*, hesitating.

"Disturbed, sorrowful?" suggested Alma.

"No, *severe*. Miladie is more severe to-day as ever. I no like to go to her, but I vill go."

"Do, good Madelon; she will be pleased to hear that I have returned," said Alma, gently.

"I know not, Meess Alma, I know not," said old Madelon, shaking her head as she left the room.

Alma, full of anxiety upon many subjects, threw herself into an arm-chair to await the coming of the *bonne*.

Nearly an hour passed before the return of Madelon, who entered, saying:

"You must pardon me for staying so long time, Meess Alma; but it was no mine fault, miladie vas keep me."

"And has she sent for me at last?"

"No, no, Meess Alma; she say you mus' dine, and then come to her, and no before."

Alma made a gesture of impatience. It was now late; time was flying fast. The hour at which she had promised to meet her unhappy father was quickly approaching, and, fraught with danger, as it might be, she was resolved to keep her appointment.

"I am not hungry; I do not wish to dine at all. Why cannot I go to my mother at once?"

"Miladie's commands—Meess Alma must rest, and must eat, and then come."

"But if I am neither tired nor hungry. Can I not go to mamma now?"

"No, miladie is engaged. Miladie writes letters. She

will see Meess Alma later. She will send when she wants her child."

"Go on then, Madelon, I can go through the form of dinner, at least," said Alma, looking anxiously at her watch.

At was five o'clock, and she had promised to meet her father at six. There was an hour left. There might yet be time to keep her appointment. She hoped to dispatch her meal, hurry through her interview, with her mother, and then hasten to the wood.

She followed old Madelon down into the dining-room, where a delicate little repast had been prepared for her. She ate a piece of chicken and a jelly, and was picking a bunch of grapes when the lady's bell rang for Madelon, who hastened to answer it, but soon returned with a message summoning Alma to her mother's apartments.

Alma immediately hurried thither. She found the beautiful, majestic, pale-faced lady seated in the luxurious chair beside the elegant table in the midst of the gloom and glow of that crimson and golden room. That still woman was the picture of which the boudoir was but the back ground and frame.

As her daughter entered, the lady lifted her languid eyes, from the book she was reading, and silently motioned Alma to take the chair on the other side of the table.

The young girl obeyed, and waited for her mother to speak. But the lady's large eyes had again fallen upon her book, and in a few moments she seemed to have forgotten the presence of her daughter,

Alma stole a glance at her watch. It was half-past five. Her heart throbbed with anxiety. She ventured to break the silence by saying:

"I did your errand faithfully and successfully, dear mother."

"I will speak to you about that presently, Alma," said

the lady, turning a leaf of her book, and relapsing into silence.

Alma fell into thought. She had private anxieties enough of her own to engage her mind. She was extremely desirous to keep her appointment with her unhappy father. She was extremely fearful, also, of a rencounter between her father and her betrothed. She therefore felt the urgent necessity of being herself early on the ground to meet the first comer, whether that should be her father or her betrothed If it should be the former, she would draw him quickly off in some other direction to avoid a meeting with Captain Montrose. If the latter, she would merely greet him and dismiss him, to shun a rencounter with Mr. Elverton. All these plans were fraught with danger, but they were the best that she could improvise for the exigency. Meanwhile, how quickly the precious minutes flew while she sat waiting her mother's leisure.

The elegent little ormolu clock on the chimney-piece struck six.

Alma started and looked up. The hour had come.

"Mamma, I wish to take an evening walk. If you will permit me, I will go, and return when you have leisure to attend to me," said the young girl, desperately.

"Are you so impatient, Alma? Well, then, I will hear you now," said the lady, closing her book and laying it down.

"No, mamma, I am not impatient; Indeed, I should prefer taking my usual walk first, and then come to you again," replied the young girl, while a deep blush suffused her cheeks.

"You have had a long drive—enough of fresh air and exercise for one day. You may forego your walk; nay, you *must* do so."

Alma's color went and came rapidly.

The lady continued:

"I have finished my book, and am quite ready to attend you; so now tell me, how did you find your friend?"

This turned the current of Alma's thoughts, and she answered:

"Fearfully changed, mamma—so thin, so pale, so careworn, you would never have known her."

"She accepted the loan without reluctance?" asked the lady.

"No, mamma, there was much hesitation; but I used the arguments with which you had provided me, and I assured her that those who sent her the money had a personal interest in her acquittal that made it quite right they should bear their share in the cost of her defence."

"You were right; but how did she meet this explanation?"

"With the confiding faith of a grateful child—only anxious to know the names of her benefactors, that she might mention them in her prayers."

"Why do you say *benefactors*, when there was but *me*? inquired the lady.

"Mamma, when we speak of anyone in the third person, without wishing even to divulge their sex, we say 'they,' because we have no third person singular of the common gender. And because I used the pronoun 'they,' she fancied there was more than one, and spoke of her benefactors," answered Alma, blushing deeply at the necessary reservation.

"Well, but you did not give the name?"

"No, mamma."

"Did she speak of her approaching trial? Is she frightened? Has she hopes? Speak; tell me more about her."

In reply to this adjuration, Alma related in detail the full account of her visit to Eudora. And while Alma described the anguish to which the poor imprisoned girl was a prey, the lady, long past shedding tears of sympathy, could only drop her head upon her hands, and groan as one suffering under some heavy burthen of remorse.

As Alma, forgetting her own embarrassment in the deep sorrows of Eudora, was still engaged in describing the prison interview, the clock struck seven.

She started, clasped her hands, and gazed appealingly towards her mother.

"Well, it is too late now, Alma, to keep your appointment. Even if Captain Montrose has waited a whole hour over his time, it is not likely that he will wait half an hour longer, which is the length of time it would take you to reach the trysting-ground," said the lady, coldly.

"Mamma!" exclaimed the dismayed girl, distressed at this discovery of her interview with her lover, and frightened lest that discovery should have also extended to her meeting with her father. Upon this latter point, however, the next words of Mrs. Elverton reassured her.

"Yes, poor child, I know all about it; you went to the wood yesterday to meet Norham Montrose."

"But, mamma—"

"Nay, poor girl, I do not blame you for the past, but I give you leave to blame *me*, both for the past and the future, if ever you meet your lover again."

"Oh, mamma!" sobbed Alma, drawing near, and sinking at her mother's feet.

But Mrs. Elverton, with a shudder of repulsion, rolled her chair back, and said:

"Alma, resume your seat. Keep as far from me as you can, keep so as to remain in ear-shot only, while I speak to you."

Tremblingly Alma arose and receded to her chair, where she sat with pallid cheeks, clasped hands, and wistful eyes still fixed upon the stern, white face of that strange mother.

"Alma," said the lady, coldly, "I do not mean to deal in mysteries. I learned this morning from the old gardener, Denny—who begged an interview with me for the purpose of making a communication which he deemed it his duty to

make—that you had an interview with Captain Montrose in the woods behind the house last evening. At least he met you loitering there, and a few minutes later met Captain Montrose going towards you. He inferred that there was an interview and an appointment. Alma, was the old man right?"

"Mamma," said Alma, seeking to hide her fiery blushes with both hands. "Yes, he told you the truth; but oh, mamma, hear my defence—"

"Not now—not until I have done speaking. I dismissed the old man, with thanks for his fidelity, and with an injunction to silence, which I am sure that he will observe for your sake; for be assured, Alma, that such interviews seriously compromise the fair fame of a young girl."

"Mamma! Oh! let me explain—" again interrupted Alma, who seemed unable to bear for an instant the implied reproach in her mother's words.

"Not yet; not yet, Alma; hear me out. After thinking over the old man's story, I came to the conclusion that the interview of yesterday might have been accidental—"

"It was, indeed, partly so, mamma."

"And that it might or might not have resulted in an appointment for this evening. I did not wish to accuse you wrongfully, so I resolved to detain you in this room and observe your manner. And, Alma, your own restlessness and anxiety have revealed to me that you *had* made such an appointment with Captain Montrose this evening. Is it not so?"

"Yes, mamma, yes; but hear me and forgive me"

"Presently—presently; but let me tell you first that the days of romance and poetry, of troubadours and knights, and damsels-errant have past ages and ages ago. You cannot bring romance into your real life, except at the cost of your fair fame. And I would not have a single evanescent cloud pass before that which should be as bright as a clear

summer day—for it is the only bright thing in your life, Alma!"

"And my fair fame shall continue bright, mamma! Oh! trust me and believe it!" said Alma, earnestly.

"Not if these interviews are repeated," replied the lady, coldly.

"Mamma, an angel might have been present at our meetings without offence to its heavenly nature," insisted Alma, fervently.

"And yet not even an angel's testimony would be taken for that."

"Oh, mamma!"

"Nay, I do not doubt your word, girl, nor blame you much; but I do very severely censure the conduct of Captain Montrose, who, as a man of the world, knew well how seriously he compromised you," said Mrs. Elverton, sternly.

"Mamma! mamma! he is not to be censured!" exclaimed Alma, warmly.

"Not for persuading an inexperienced young girl, of high rank, to give him interviews in the woods? What do you mean?"

"Mamma, hear me! Captain Montrose wished nothing better than your sanction to pay his addresses openly to your daughter. He wrote to you and wrote to my grandfather, earnestly entreating such sanction; and his overtures were rejected by both!"

"And properly so!"

"And why, mamma?" Oh! why? He is certainly a gentleman of ancient family of unblemished character, and of good position! Why were his proposals so curtly rejected? At least, dear mamma, you owe it to me to give a reason!" pleaded Alma.

"It should be a reason sufficient to satisfy you, Alma, that neither Lord Elverton nor myself chose to favor his addresses."

"But it is not, mamma! My beating heart cannot be answered so!" said Alma, earnestly.

"Then I have no other answer to give you, Miss Elverton!" said the lady, freezingly.

"Oh, mother, mother, do not speak to me so coldly; if you knew how sad my life is you would not do it! But, mother, let me talk to you a little of Norham," prayed Alma.

"In my youth, and in my country, young ladies never talked of their lovers, but blushed when others named them. I know not, however, but that a few years of time and a few miles of space may alter customs," said Mrs. Elverton, ironically.

"I know not, mamma; but if anywhere young women blush to hear their lovers named, it must be because they are happy in their loves; for if it were otherwise it seems to me that their cheeks would pale, not redden."

"And yours should blanch to marble, girl, at the name of love or marriage!" said the lady, in a low, stern, sad voice.

Her words escaped the ears of Alma, who, leaning forward, clasping her hands, and fixing her eyes earnestly upon the pale face of her mother, said:

"Mamma, mamma, *will* you let me speak to you from my heart this once?"

The lady did not reply, and her daughter continued:

"Oh, let me speak to you freely, my mother! To whom can I speak, if not to you? Oh, hear me!—for who will hear me if not you? Whom have I in the world but you? And, mother, who have you in the world but me? Between what two in the universe should there be confidence if not between us?—so separated as we seem from all the earth, so isolated, so lonely? Mother, may I speak to you, at least for once, from my heart?"

"Speak on, Alma; I hear you!"

"Mamma, I wish to account for these few, very few, and mostly chance meetings with Norham in the woods. And

to do so I must commence at the commencement, and speak of the utter—utter loneliness of my life—the loneliness like living death that has been my lot from the moment of my birth, I think, to the present hour."

"One would naturally suppose that a condition which had commenced with your birth, Alma, and continued to the present time—since you could have known no other—must have become a second nature."

"One would think so, perhaps: and yet again, perhaps, such a second nature, formed by unnatural circumstances, could not be so forced upon the first original nature created by God. You may take the chrysalis, and shut it under an inverted glass, and so long as it remains a chrysalis it will be happy in its way; but when it developes into a butterfly, and spreads its wings, must it not pine, and suffocate, and die for want of space, and exercise, and air?"

"What mean you, Alma?"

"Mamma, when I was a child, I was happy dressing my dolls and playing with my pets; when I was a school-girl I was contented pursuing my studies and talking with my governess; but all these things have passed away with childhood and girlhood. I am a woman now, with all a woman's craving for human society, sympaty, and affection. Oh, if I speak plainly, I cannot help it! I feel every hour in the day, and every minute in the hour, that there is something fearfully wrong *here* and *here!*" said Alma, placing her hand upon her head and heart. "And, mamma, believe me, that I feel, if this dreadful hunger of the heart and mind is not satisfied, idiotcy or death must be the result. Mamma, I was happier during the hour that I passed with poor Eudora in her prison-cell, than I have ever been in all the years that I have passed in this splendid living tomb. And why, mamma—why? Only because in that wretched prison-cell I was at least *en rapport* with another human creature!"

"Alma, come to the point—what is it you wish me to do?"

"Mamma bear with me a little while. I was about to say that it was this utter, utter loneliness of life and heart, that laid me so open to the advances of almost any person, man, woman, or child, who might have crossed my path—for the starving will eat husks rather than perish; but Providence sent across my path a noble-minded man, my equal in birth, intellect, and position. He esteemed me, and won my esteem. He asked the sanction of my parents to his addresses, and his overtures were rejected by them. He loved me, and so he haunted the neighborhood of my home only to be near me. From childhood I have been accustomed to walk in those woods where he often accidentally met me. Yesterday I walked as usual in those woods. I will not deceive you, mamma, or say that I did not secretly hope he might be walking there also. He was; and we met. We had not spoken together for a very long time, and it was then so late in the evening that our interview was necessarily very short. And so we agreed to meet again this afternoon—to meet as betrothed lovers, who are to marry as soon as they both obtain their majority; for, mamma, there must come a time, when, if I live, I shall be free, by the laws of God and man, to give my hand where my heart has long been given—and I have promised, when that time shall come, to be the wife of Norham Montrose, and, mamma, I mean to keep my promise! There, mamma, I have told you all."

It was impossible that that white-faced woman could have become whiter, but now a livid grayness crept over her features that also seemed to harden into stone. It was in a low, level, ominous monotone that she repeated:

"You have told me all—now what is it you wish me to do?"

"Oh, mamma, pity me, take me to your heart, give me your confidence, make me happy—it will take but a little

to do that! Recall Norham Montrose; give him your sanction to visit me here in your house—here under your eye!" prayed Alma, with clasped hands and beseeching eyes.

"I am glad that you have spoken so plainly, girl, for now I can answer you; and you must take that answer to be as final and immutable as though the words were sealed by the most solemn and binding oaths. And my answer is this—that you must never see Captain Montrose again!"

"Oh, mamma, mamma, tell me at least why you object to him. Is it his birth, his position, or his character?" exclaimed Alma, earnestly.

"It is neither. His birth, position, and character might fairly entitle him to wed any young lady in the land."

"Is there, then, any family feud between his House and mine, such as sometimes divide——"

"Lovers?—a Montague and Capulet folly? No! His family and yours have always been the best friends. In short, Alma, neither Lord Elverton nor myself, nor any of our friends have the least personal objection whatever either to Captain Montrose himself or to any of his family. I can assure you of that, if it can give you any satisfaction."

"Oh, it does—it does, mamma! God bless you for that tribute to Norham's worth! Oh, mamma, you have told me what the objection is *not*—oh, tell me what it *is!* I might find a way—"

"Alma," interrupted the lady, in a deep, low, stern voice, "many months ago I warned you that love and marriage were not for you; many months ago I warned you, if you would escape the heaviest curse that could hurl a soul to perdition, to avoid the friendship of woman, and the love of man—DID I not?"

"Yes, you did—you did! but *why*, WHY, my mother?" demanded Alma, with her hands still tightly clasped and extended, and her eyes still fixed upon the face of her mother.

"Alma," commenced the lady, in a voice of almost awful solemnity, "if I might be permitted to do so, I would willingly spare you the anguish of hearing the words that I must speak; but destiny is stronger than I am—stronger than all are!"

"Say on, my mother. Oh, say on! If there is anything I ought to know, let me hear it—never mind the pain!" prayed Alma, with her clasped hands

"But, oh! must it be my tongue that tells you at last, Alma, that your parents' marriage proved the most awful calamity that could have crushed any two human beings! That your birth was a curse to Hollis Elverton—a curse to me, and deeper still, a curse to you! That *your* love lighting upon any human being would be the darkest misfortune that could fall upon them! That *your* marriage with any man would be the direst catastrophe that could blight him—"

Her dreadful words were interrupted by a wild, half suppressed shriek from Alma, who buried her face in her open hands for a moment, and then raising her head, cried:

"Mother, I must be marble!—yes, marble! I cannot be flesh and blood as others, or your words would kill me!"

"And you are not flesh and blood as others! but something set apart, accursed, that must not join heart or hand with any other human being!"

"But why, *why*, WHY, my mother? that is what I wish to know, what I *ought* to know, what I *will* know! for when you pronounce a sentence that may consign me at eighteen years of age to the long-living death of an existence without love, without friendship, without sympathy, without communion with my kind, I ought, I *must*, I WILL know the reason *why!*" cried Alma, with wild and startling energy.

"Poor wretch!" muttered the lady, with something like pity vibrating in the cold monotone of her voice, and disturbing the strong rigidity of her features—"poor wretch! you rush blindly upon your fate just as I did! Aye, your

very words were once mine! Alma, when, eighteen years ago, Hollis Elverton rushed into my presence, and, in frenzied despair, told me that we must part then, there, and forever, I, too, in the extremity of my anguish and terror, demanded and wrung from him the *why*—the WHY that doomed me to that living death of widowhood."

"And he told you. My father kept no secret from the wife of his bosom," said the young girl.

"He told me. Alma, there are things that kill the soul in the body and turn the body into stone! He told me—he whispered one dreadful word in my ear that struck me down at his feet as a thunderbolt strikes a statue to the ground! When I recovered my consciousness he was gone, and I knew that he could not, ought not, must not ever return!"

"And yet he loved you, my mother?" whispered Alma, in the half hushed tone of awe.

"Yes," muttered the lady.

"And yet you loved him?"

"Yes."

"And your marriage was happy up to that fatal evening?"

"Perfectly happy."

"And yet—and yet——"

"And yet we parted—yes, as ships at sea that meet and strike in the fog and fly asunder—wrecks doomed to go down to destruction! So we married, and so we severed."

"Was it right?"

"It was right."

"Oh, mother, what made it right? What could make it right that you and my father, who loved each other so devotedly, who were so worthy of each other, too, and whose marriage was so happy in itself, and so highly approved by all, should separate so suddenly—so utterly and everlastingly.

The lady did not reply, but turned away her face to avoid the searching eyes of her daughter.

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Alma, "there could have been but one reason—some previous engagement, or bond, or, or——"

She could not bring herself to utter the other word, but dropped her face in her hands, while her bosom rose and fell with those convulsive, tearless sobs that seem to "press the life from out young hearts."

"I know what you would say, Alma; but you are mistaken, poor, unhappy girl! There was no previous engagement, bond or, love, far less marriage, either on Hollis Elverton's side or mine, with any third person whose existence could invalidate our marriage. Hollis Elverton was a bachelor and I a girl when we married, nor had either of us ever loved until we met and loved each other. No, Alma, it was no previous marriage that burst ours asunder," said the lady, as some memory of unusually exquisite pain convulsed her statue-like form.

"Then, in the name of heaven, earth and hades, *what* was it?" exclaimed Alma, with starting vehemence.

"I have told you enough—enough to decide your fate. I must not tell you more!"

"Yes, and without any reason assigned, you have pronounced a sentence of excommunication and outlawry against me; a sentence that cuts me off from the comforts of religion and the intercourse of society; a sentence that dooms me to a fate worse, infinitely worse than death. But, mother, without a reason that shall convince my own judgment, and satisfy my own conscience, I cannot, and ought not, to accept that sentence or submit to that fate?" said Alma, with gentle firmness.

"Rash girl, what do you mean by that?"

"I mean, mamma, that, though I may obey your hard commands while I am a minor, even though obedience may destroy my life or reason, as it may, but when I am free, mamma, as every one ought to be at some period of their life, I must redeem my plighted troth by bestowing my

hand upon that Norham Montrose to whom even you acknowledge that you have no personal objection whatever. This is all I mean, mamma."

"But in the interval you will meet him and converse with him often?"

"No, mother, I will not seek to see him; I will even try to avoid him."

"But if he should throw himself in your way, or happen to meet you and speak to you, you would answer him—you would converse with him?"

"I wish I could promise you that I would not, mamma; but oh, I could not keep such a promise, believe me I could not," said Alma, convulsed with sobs.

"I do believe you; and that belief forces me at length to speak that word—that word which must sever you at once and forever from him and from all others—that word which may sink into your heart and corrode your life until you are as bloodless as I am; or, that may kill you at once—strike you down dead before me! Be it so; better you should die than live to marry," said the lady, rising and approaching her daughter, while the grayness of death again overspread her pallid face.

Alma, with a dreadful sickness of the heart, waited to hear some fatal communication.

Mrs. Elverton bent down and whispered in her ear.

Alma sprang to her feet, gazed with dilated eyes and blanched cheeks in bewildering despair upon her mother's face, as though unable to receive at once the full horror of her words, and then drew her hands wildly to her head, reeled forward and fell senseless to the floor.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE TRIAL.

Her veil was backward thrown;
Relieving tears refused to flow,
All drank by her great thirsty woe,
She seemed transformed to stone.
Save that at times her white lips quivered,
And her young limbs like aspen shivered,
And burst a low, sad moan!—*Nicholas Michell*

And how did Eudora pass the few anxious days of imprisonment preceding her trial?

Oh, Heaven! how much the human heart may bear, and yet live on! Who can compute the amount of sorrow, humiliation and terror that formed the great weight of anguish that pressed her young heart almost to death?

Deep, poignant grief for the loss of her nearest and dearest kindred; burning shame at the infamous charge under which she suffered, and shuddering horrors at the awful doom that darkly lowered over her.

Either of these passionate emotions singly was enough to have crushed her heart or crazed her brain. All of them at once she was fated to endure.

Often, as with closed eyes and laboring lungs she lay upon the narrow bed of her prison cell, she thought that her fainting heart must stop, and her gasping breath cease forever. Often she hoped that they might. And thus, indeed, her light of life might have been smothered beneath its weight of anguish, but for the tender care of those few devoted friends who cherished the dying flame.

Malcolm Montrose, Counsellor Fenton, Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Barton, all endeavored in every possible way to comfort, cheer, sustain and strengthen Eudora.

She was seldom left alone for half an hour during the day.

The devoted love of her betrothed gave her consolation; the confident manner of her advocate inspired her with hope; the zealous friendship of the governor filled her with gratitude, and the constant attention of her wardress left her little time for brooding melancholy.

And thus passed the days that brought the fatal Monday for the opening of the assizes.

That Monday on which those assizes were held will long be remembered in Abbeytown.

The most intense interest was felt by people in all ranks of society, in all parts of the country, in the approaching trial of a young, beautiful, and high-born girl, for the atrocious crime of poisoning.

All persons who could possibly leave their homes, came to Abbeytown to abide during the holding of the assizes, for the purpose of being present at the trial.

As early as the Saturday previous, the hotels, lodging-houses, and even private dwellings, began to fill with an ever-increasing crowd of visitors.

On Sunday the town was quite full. On Monday, though the multitude continued to pour in, not one disengaged room or bed was to be procured for love or money within its boundaries.

Ingle, the young law-clerk that had come up from London in attendance upon Mr. Fenton, declared that Abbeytown during these assizes, looked like Epsom in the race week.

Lord Chief Baron Elverton was on the circuit that year.

About nine o'clock in the morning, the hour of the judges' arrival having been duly notified by telegraph, the high sheriff, with his constabulary staff, proceeded to the railway station to meet and escort their lordships to the town.

They drove from the station to the Leaton Arms, where the best suites of apartments had been pre-engaged for

their accommodation, and where a public breakfast awaited them.

At about twelve at noon the whole party went in procession to the court-house, and opened the commission.

The whole of that afternoon was occupied with the preliminary business of the session.

The second day was employed in trying those common rural cases of poaching, riot, and petty larceny that took precedence upon the docket of the one great trial. These were all disposed of before the adjournment of the court on Tuesday evening.

And thus on Wednesday morning it was confidently expected that, as soon as the court should meet, the case of the "Crown *vs.* Eudora Leaton," charged with poisoning, would be called.

The same lawyers' clerk, whose talents lay rather in drawing comparisons than briefs, declared that if the town at the opening of the assizes resembled Epsom in the race week, it now bore a striking likeness to that famous little village on the Derby-day.

Abbeytown was indeed full to repletion. Every house, every street, every thoroughfare was crowded to suffocation. Every avenue approaching the court-house was blocked up by carriages, horses, and foot-passengers.

Every person seemed to have come with the wild idea of being able to catch a glimpse of the notorious prisoner as she was conveyed from the gaol to the court-house, or even with the mad hope of getting a seat in the halls of justice to witness the trial. Of course most were disappointed; for the narrow court-room could not comfortably accommodate much more than one hundred souls, or, compactly crowded, more than two hundred; though upon this particular occasion nearly three hundred persons were said to have been squeezed between its four walls. The aristocracy, gentry, and yoemanry of the country were repre-

sented among the spectators that filled to suffocation that court-room.

In one part of the hall, to the right of the bench, were assembled the whole family from the Anchorage; for not only the Admiral, Sir Ira Brunton, his nephew, the young lieutenant, his grand-daughter, Annella, his guest, the Italian princess, but even his ancestresses, the two ancient dames, were present, drawn thither by the intense interest of the approaching trial.

In the very deepest shadow of a corner behind this group stood apart a tall man, whose form was enveloped in a long, dark cloak, and whose face was shaded by a deep sombrero hat.

At some little distance, sulky, silent and alone, stood Norham Montrose.

And all there were so closely pressed in by the crowd, that they could neither move, converse, nor scacely breathe. The whole assembly seemed so intensely anxious for the commencement of the trial, that they hardly once removed their eyes from the door by which the prisoner was expected to be brought into court. At half-past nine the judges appeared.

As soon as the Lord Chief Baron Elverton and the associate judges took their seats, the eyes of the whole assembly were directed towards the bench.

Indeed, the central figure there, the presiding judge, Lord Chief Baron Elverton, was, by his imposing presence, no less than his august office and his mysterious family history, calculated to attract and rivet attention.

He was now but sixty years of age, though looking seventy-five or eighty. His once large, massive, and erect form was now bowed, shrunken and emaciated: his fine, high, noble features were faded, sunken, and sharpened; his once luxuriant auburn hair and beard were now thin and white as snow; his countenance, though expressive of intellectual pride and conscious power, was impressed with

the ineffaceable marks of deep suffering modified by patient benignity.

But what was the nature of that suffering? Was it inconsolable sorrow for some heavy misfortune earth could never repair? Or was it inextinguishable remorse for some deep sin that Heaven could not pardon?

No one ever knew, or even surmised. But, as the spectators looked upon that care-worn face, they spoke together in whispers, of that strange, terrible, unexplained episode in his family history; the sudden, fearful midnight flight of his son; the total estrangement between himself and his daughter-in-law, and the rigid seclusion of his young grand-daughter; and, for the hundredth time, wondered whatever could be at the bottom of those mysteries. For the moment, even the impending trial was forgotten in this discussion of the family secrets of Lord Elverton.

But the attention of the assembly was soon recalled to its first subject.

The prisoner was ordered to be brought into court.

And once more every eye was turned and fixed in unwinking vigilance upon the door by which she was expected to enter.

And all this eager curiosity in the crowd was only to see one poor, frightened, trembling girl brought up to trial for life or death.

They had not long to wait for their spectacle.

The doors were thrown open, and the young prisoner was led in between the deputy-sheriff and the female turnkey.

The merciless gaze of those hundreds of eager eyes fell, not upon a bold woman—a hardened criminal—but upon a young, slight, delicate girl, dressed in black and deeply veiled, who advanced with trembling steps and downcast eyes.

Behind her walked Malcolm Montrose, whose haggard

countenance betrayed the agony of anxiety he suffered on her account.

She was led up the length of the hall and let into the dock, where a seat had been placed for her by some kind hand.

At a sign from the sheriff, the wardress entered and took a place by her side.

Malcolm Montrose posted himself as near the dock as he could possibly get.

As Eudora dropped into her seat, her head sank upon her breast, her hands fell upon her lap, and her whole form collapsed and shrank beneath the oppressive gaze of that large assembly.

Yet, if the poor girl could have looked up, she would have seen more than one pair of eyes regarding her with an expression kinder than mere curiosity; even those of the venerable judge were bent upon her in deep compassion.

But she dared not lift her head.

She heard a murmur of voices, a stir of hands, a rustle of papers, and then the voice of the clerk of arraigns, calling out:

"Eudora Leaton!"

She started as though she had received a blow, and instinctively threw aside her veil.

And the beautiful, pale, agonized young face was revealed to the whole assembly.

A murmur of compassion moved, breeze-like, through the hitherto pitiless crowd, and a single half-suppressed cry was heard from the Anchorage party.

That cry came from Annella Wilder, who then for the first time discovered the identity between her friend Miss Miller and the accused Eudora Leaton.

"Attend to the reading of the indictment," continued the clerk, addressing the prisoner.

Eudora obeyed by lifting her frightened eyes to the

cold, business-like face of the speaker, who commenced reading the formidable document he held in his hand, setting forth in successive counts how the prisoner, Eudora Leaton, being impelled by satanic agency, with malice prepense, at certain times and places therein specified, by the administration of certain poisonous and deadly drugs, did feloniously procure and effect the death of the Honorable Agatha Leaton, &c., &c., &c.

"Prisoner at the bar, arise, and hold up your right hand," ordered the clerk, when the reading was finished.

Eudora, pale, faint and trembling, obeyed.

"Prisoner, you have heard the charge against you. Are you guilty or not guilty of the felonies with which you are accused?"

"Not guilty, as I shall answer at the last day before the awful bar of God," said Eudora, in a low, sweet, solemn voice, that thrilled through the hearts of that whole assembly, as she sank again into her seat.

The attorney-general, who had come down from London to prosecute this most important case, now arose in his place, took the bill of indictment from the clerk of arraigns, and proceeded to open the case on the part of the Crown.

He commenced by saying that his duty in the present instance was extremely distressing in its nature, but, fortunately, simple in its course; that the case he stood there to prosecute, dark as it was with the deepest guilt, was yet so clearly illumined by the light of evidence, that happily it need not occupy the court long; that whether they considered the tender youth of the criminal, the cold-blooded atrocity of the crime, or the high worth of the victims, this agonizing case had no parallel in the long experience of the oldest barrister living, or the whole history of criminal jurisprudence; that he need not recall to memory the celebrated cases of Borgia, Essex, Brinvilliers, or Lafarge to prove that youth, beauty, womanhood and high rank combined, were not incompatible with deep guilt and dark

crimes in their possessors; that he did not mean to draw any comparison between the female fiends he had named and the prisoner at the bar, for he should soon prove Eudora Leaton had succeeded in reaching a much higher point upon the "bad eminence" of criminal fame than had ever been attained by Lafarge, Brinvilliers, Essex, or Borgia.

"The prisoner," he said, "of Indian parentage, was the only child of the late Honorable Charles Leaton and his wife, Oolah Kalooh, of Lahore, and, doubtless, she must have derived from her mother all those subtle, secretive, and treacherous elements of character for which the East Indian is noted, while she gained from her father all that rare, dangerous, botanical knowledge of the deadly plants of the country, the study of which had once been his favorite pastime, and the acquaintance with which has been recently her most fatal medium of destruction.

"By the death of her parents," he continued, "she was left an orphan at the early age of sixteen years. Her uncle, the late Lord Leaton, as soon as he received intelligence of her condition, dispatched a special messenger to India to bring her home to his own house. Upon her arrival, he, as well as his whole family, received the orphan with the utmost tenderness, placing her at once upon an equal footing with his own only daughter and sole heiress."

"But how," inquired the prosecutor, "has the benevolence, confidence, and affection of this honored family been repaid by their cherished *protegée!* They have been repaid by the blackest ingratitude, the foulest treachery, the deepest guilt; they have been repaid with death—the insidious, protracted, dreadful death of slow poison—poison administered by her whom they received into the bosom of their family.

"And what," he asked, "tempted this young, beautiful, and high-born girl to plunge herself into this deep Gehenna of guilt, misery, and infamy?

"The basest motive that could influence human nature—

the love of lucre! She knew that, in the event of the death of Lord and Lady Leaton and their daughter, *she* must be the sole inheritor of the whole Leaton estate; and for this inheritance she has perpetrated crimes unequalled in atrocity by her most notorious predecessors of criminal celebrity.

"She has sacrificed her nearest kindred in this world, and her dearests interests in the next. She has destroyed those who sheltered her. Yes, she whom they received into their homes and hearts, warmed at their household fire, cherished with their bosom's love, *she* drugged their daily food and drink with the deadliest poisons, until they wasted, withered, and perished before her, as plants before the breath of the death-blowing sirocco!

"As under the action of this slow poison, one after another sank upon the last couch of illness, *she* it was who superseded every honest and trustworthy attendant, and with deceitful zeal and deadly purpose, hovered about the bed of death!

"*Her* hand it was that changed the heated billow, bathed the burning brow, and then placed the poisoned cup to the parched lips that thanked her for the cooling draught, and blessed her for her loving care!

"*Her* hand it was that wiped the death-dew from the fading forehead, returned the last pressure of the failing fingers, and closed the glazing eyes of the dead victim—dead by her deed. But they

> "'Are in their graves, where she,
> Their murderess, soon shall be.'

"For she has lost the game at which she staked her soul, and sits there now to wait her doom.

"Bowed down and crushed almost unto death is she? Aye, not by grief for her sin, but for that 'sin's detection and despair.'

"Beautiful, is she? Aye! beautiful as all the fatal growths of her native clime! beautiful as the spotted ser-

pent of her jungles—as the striped tigress of her forests —as the stately ignatia of her plains!

"Thank Heaven, she is not a native of civilized and Christian Europe, but of that deadly clime where the fierce heat of the sun draws from the earth the most noxious plants, and developes in man and brute the most ferocious passions—the land of the upas and the cobra—the land of Nena Sahib!

"But enough," he concluded. He would not deal in invective, or seek to exaggerate that guilt which no words of the prosecutor could magnify. He had stated the facts of the case; he would now proceed to call witnesses to prove them.

This severe opening charge was felt by all to be no mere official denunciation by the prosecutor, but the awful truth, as he himself believed it to be, and finally succeeded in causing judge jury, and audience to accept it.

Its effect upon the poor young prisoner was overwhelming She drooped still lower, and breathed from the depths of her wounded spirit—

"Oh, Father, Thou, who knoweth all things, knowest that this is not true of me; Thou who canst do all things, will yet deliver me from this death!"

But was she the greatest sufferer there! Ah, no! He who stood behind her, hearing this terrible charge, without the power of contradicting her accuser—seeing all eyes fixed in horror upon her without the privilege of saying one word in her defence, and witnessing her distress without the means of consoling it—suffered more, though he bore up better than she did.

Upon our simple family party from the Anchorage the effect of the attorney-general's opening address was very profound.

"Dear, dear, dear!" sighed old Mrs. Stilton, whose simple mind received every word uttered by that high dignitary as gospel truth, because how could such a learned

gentleman be mistaken? "Dear, dear, dear! what a young devil she is to be sure!"

"Yes—a real young Indjan demon! a genuine little cobra-di-capello—an infant Thug! They'll be sure to hang her, that's one comfort!" said the admiral.

"It is false! The attorney-general is no better than a licensed slanderer! I hate him! and I wish *he* was on trial!" cried Annella, bursting into tears of rage and grief.

But the clerk was calling the first witness for the Crown, and all eyes and ears were directed to the words of that functionary.

The evidence for the prosecution was essentially the same as that elicited at the coroner's inquest and at the magistrate's investigation. It need not be repeated in detail here. It is sufficient to say that the first witnesses examined were the medical men who had assisted at the autopsy of the dead bodies, and the analysis of the tamarind-water. Their testimony clearly proved that the deceased had died from the effects of ignatia, and that the fatal drug had been administered in their drink.

And the severest cross-examination of these witnesses by the counsel for the prisoner only served the more strongly to confirm the facts, and the more deeply to impress them upon the minds of the jury.

"And thus," said the counsel for the Crown, "the primary item in the prosecution—to wit, that the deceased came to their death by poison—may be considered as established. Our next care shall be to prove that this poison was feloniously administered by the prisoner at the bar."

The witnesses examined upon this point were the household servants of Allworth Abbey, who all testified to the facts that Miss Eudora Leaton had been the constant attendant upon the sick-beds of the deceased; that she had prepared all their food and drink, and especially the

tamarind-water, and that she was with Miss Agatha Leaton at the hour of her sudden death.

These witnesses were carefully cross-examined by Mr. Fenton, but, alas! with no favorable result for his unhappy client!

Finally, the police-officers who had executed the search-warrant for examining the chamber of the prisoner, produced a small packet of strange-looking grey berries, that they testified to having found hidden in a secret drawer of her escritoire.

The medical men were recalled, and identified these to be the deadly *fabæ Sancti Ignatii* of the East Indies, the same fatal poison which had been discovered in the autopsy of the dead bodies and the analysis of the tamarind-water.

These were the last witnesses examined on the part of the prosecution. And as it had happened before, the closest cross-examination by the prisoner's advocate only resulted in strengthening the testimony.

"And now," concluded the Queen's counsel, "the second item in the prosecution—namely, that the poison by which the deceased came to their death was feloniously administered by the prisoner at the bar—may be considered so clearly proved that we are contented here to rest the case for the Crown."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE CONVICTION.

Thus on her doom to think,
Well may the dews of torture now
Hang bead-like on her straining brow,
Well may her spirit shrink.
'Tis hard in youth to yield our breath;
To die in thought is double death,
Shivering on fate's cold brink.—*Nicholas Michell.*

Mr. Fenton arose for the defence. He was much too wise to weaken his cause by attempting to deny that which was undeniable. He therefore resolved to waive the first, and to concentrate his forces upon the overthrow of the second and vital point in the prosecution.

He commenced by saying that he would admit the fact that the Leaton family had perished by poison, but would totally deny that this poison had been administered by his client.

"Let the jury," he said, "look upon Eudora Leaton, where she sits, overwhelmed with her weight of woe! Observe how young, how delicate, how sensitive she is. Can any one for an instant suppose that she, a young girl of sixteen springs, a mere child in years, an infant still in law, could have conceived, planned and executed so atrocious a crime as the destruction of a whole family to clear the way for her own inheritance of their estates! Such a supposition would be preposterous.

"It can only be because, for the deep atrocity of this crime, the law demands an instant victim, and no other is to be found, that this poor child has been seized and offered here as a sacrifice to appease the offended majesty of justice. And if in the end she is immolated, it will be only

as the pascal lamb, slain upon the altar of the temple for the sins of others!

"I will not," he continued, "affect to disregard the meshes of coincidence that envelop my most innocent client.

"Like the poor lost dove, beaten down by the storm, and fallen into the net of the fowler, she is involved in a coil of circumstances that may prove to be her destruction, unless the just interpretation of an intelligent jury intervene to save her from unmerited martyrdom.

"But," he continued, "I have a theory that I shall offer in explanation of those circumstances, which I firmly believe must exonerate my client in the mind of the jury and every just person present.

"Before proceeding further, I will read a few extracts from the records of the coroner's inquest upon the case."

Here Counsellor Fenton took from the hands of his clerk certain documents, from which he read aloud that part of the evidence given by the late Lady Leaton, in which she testified to having seen the shadow of a woman's form upon the wall, and heard the rustle of a woman's dress along the floor of her husband's chamber a few moments before he drank the fatal sleeping-draught that stood upon the stand beside his bed on the night of his death.

Next the advocate turned to another part of the record, and read the evidence given by the late Miss Leaton, in which she deposed that, at the very time at which her mother heard the noise and saw the shadow in her father's room, Eudora was seated beside Agatha's bed, engaged in the vain effort to read the restless invalid to sleep.

Finally, he referred to the record of the second coroner's inquest, and read the evidence given by Eudora Leaton, in which she testified that, while watching by the bedside of her cousin, on the night of her death, she fell into a light slumber, from which she was awakened by the impression

of some one moving about the room, and that at the moment of opening her eyes, she saw a figure steal away through the door opening into her own adjoining chamber; but that on following the figure, she found the next room vacant, and therefore fancied that her half-awakened senses had deceived her.

"The evidence which I have just read," continued Counsellor Fenton, as he returned the documents to the hands of his clerk, "is so significant, so important, so vital to the cause of justice, that, had it been permitted to have its due influence with the coroner's jury, no such cruel suspicion could have fallen upon Eudora Leaton as that which has placed her here on trial for her life. And now at least, when that evidence shall be duly considered, it must entirely exonerate this most innocent girl. From that evidence, gentlemen of the jury, I draw the whole theory of this most mysterious chain of crime, and that theory I would undertake to establish, as the only true one, to your perfect satisfaction.

"The whole Leaton family have perished by the hand of the poisoner. True—alas! most horribly true! But who, then, is that poisoner? Who but that nocturnal visitor, who had stolen like a fell assassin to the chamber of Agatha Leaton, and while her watcher slumbered, put the poison into her drink, and whose ill-boding form was seen by the awakening watcher to steal away and disappear in the darkness? Who, but that midnight intruder, who, in the temporary absence of Lady Leaton, glided like an evil spirit to the bedside of Lord Leaton, and dropped the deadly drug into his drink, and whose rustling raiment was heard by Lady Leaton to sweep across the floor like the trailing wings of a demon, and whose dark shadow was seen to glide swiftly along the wall like its vanishing form?

"But who was this fiend in human form. Not Eudora Leaton, whom the testimony of the late Agatha Leaton

proved to have been at that hour engaged in another place. Who, then was it? Heaven only knows! But whoever it might have been, it was one who, in resolving upon the destruction of the whole Leaton family, had determined upon the death of Eudora too! One, who in carrying out the fell purpose of extirpation, while compassing the death of Lord and Lady Leaton and their daughter, took measures to fix the crime upon Eudora Leaton for her ruin. The same fiend who, in the midnight glided into the chamber of Agatha Leaton, and infused the deadly ignatia into her cooling drink, in passing through Eudora's room, deposited the fatal drug in her drawers to fix this suspicion upon her! It was a most diabolical plot, worthy only of the accursed spirits of Tophet.

"This," he concluded, "was his theory of the murders, a theory that he most fervently believed to be the true one —a theory that he most earnestly entreated the jury to deeply consider before consigning a young, lovely, and accomplished woman; a delicate, sensitive, refined being; a most injured, most unhappy, yet most innocent maiden, to the deep dishonor of a capital conviction, the unspeakable wretchedness of a blighted name, and the horrible martyrdom of a public death!"

The advocate sat down *really*, not professionally, overcome by his emotions.

The influence of this address upon the unhappy girl was very beneficial; it inspired her with hope; it revived her sinking courage; it enabled her to look up and breathe.

The effect upon the spectators was seen by their changed expression. They no longer regarded the poor young prisoner with looks of horror, but with eyes full of compassion. But the effect upon our guileless friends of the Anchorage was noteworthy.

"Well, now, perhaps after all she did not do it, poor thing!" observed the blunt admiral, whose convictions were shaken by Mr. Fenton's address.

"Didn't do it? Why, of course she didn't do it!" exclaimed Mrs. Stilton, who had been turned completely round by the advocate's speech; "it's certain she didn't do it. Haven't you just heard the nice gentleman in the gown and wig explain how it was all a plot against her, poor dear, motherless child? It's my belief as the attorney-general was in it; and it's my hopes he'll be found out and punished. I don't believe the good Queen knew anything about it, as forward as they are using her name in the dockerments."

"I love that dear, darling old Lawyer Fenton. Oh, how I do love him for his defence of poor Eudora! Yes, I do, Cousin Vally, and so you needn't bite your underlip and frown. I do love him, and if he was to ask me to have him, I'd marry him to-morrow!" exclaimed Annella, to the annoyance of Mr. Valorous Brightwell, who could not see any reason for such enthusiastic gratitute.

But the clerk of arraigns was summoning witnesses for the defence, and the attention of the spectators was immediately attracted.

These witnesses were some of the household servants of Allworth Abbey, and some of the friends and neighbors of the Leaton family, who being in turn called and sworn, testified to the integrity and amiability of the prisoner, and the confidence and affection that existed between her and the deceased.

And with the examination of the last witness, the defence closed.

Alas! how weak it was, although the best that could be offered. To the attorney-general, indeed, the defence appeared so weak and so unlikely to influence in any way the decision of the jury, that he waived his right to reply upon the evidence adduced by the counsel for the prisoner, and left the case in the hands of the judge.

The Lord Chief Baron Elverton rose to sum up the evidence on each side, and to charge the jury.

Every eye was now turned upon the noble, grave, and grief-worn face of the venerable judge, and every ear was strained to catch the words of his address, for every soul believed that from the spirit of his speech the jury would take its opinions, and the young prisoner receive her fate.

"Gentlemen of the jury," began his lordship, "you have heard the charge brought against the prisoner at the bar. You have heard that charge ably expounded by the learned counsel for the Crown, and strongly supported by the witnesses he called. You have also heard the same eloquently repudiated by the distinguished advocate for the prisoner, and somewhat affected by the evidence he has presented.

"On the one hand, the case against the prisoner, as made out by the prosecution, is strong, very strong, but it is only circumstantial, and may well be fallacious. On the other hand, the explanation of those circumstances, as offered by the defence, are plausible, extremely plausible, and may easily be true; and I feel it my duty to recommend this explanation to the most serious attention of the jury.

"Of the guilt or innocence of this young girl, none but the Omniscient can judge with infallibility; but in all cases of uncertainty it is the duty of Christian jurors, as it is the spirit of civilized law, to favor the acquittal of the prisoner. Such doubtful cases are most frequently found among those sustained solely by circumstantial evidence.

"Now, circumstantial evidence is not positive testimony —far from it. Witness the recent case of Eliza Fenning, an innocent woman, convicted by an English jury upon circumstantial evidence, but whose innocence was not discovered until after her execution, when it was too late to repair the dreadful error—when no power on earth could restore the life that the law had unjustly taken.

"One such judicial murder as that should be a warning to English juries, through all future time, never, except upon the most unquestionable proof, to assume the awful responsibility of pronouncing upon a fellow-creature's guilt,

or taking that sacred life which no earthly power ever can give back. Better that some guilty homicides should be left to the sure retribution of God than that one innocent person should be consigned to the unmerited ignominy of a capital conviction and a shameful death.

"If, from the evidence before you, you feel assured of the prisoner's guilt, it is your duty to convict her; but if any—the least degree of uncertainty disturb your judgment—it is your duty to acquit her. English law recognizes no such middle course as that taken by the jury in rendering their verdict in the celebrated case of Madeleine Smith. If the charge is considered 'not proved,' the prisoner is entitled to a full acquittal."

And, finally praying that their counsels might be directed by Omniscient wisdom, he dismissed them to the deliberation upon their verdict.

The venerable chief baron resumed his seat, and the bailiffs conducted the jury from the court-room.

The spectators breathed freely again. His lordship certainly favored the prisoner. And if ever the charge of a judge could sway the minds of a jury, those twelve men must certainly bring in a verdict of acquittal.

"All will be well, dearest Eudora. The judge believes you innocent," whispered Malcolm to the prisoner.

"All is in the hands of God," breathed the poor, pale girl, in a dying voice, for her very life seemed ebbing away under the high pressure of this terrible trial.

In other parts of the crowded court-room the charge of the judge was not quite so highly approved.

"Ah! Oh? Umph! The most one-sided charge I ever heard in all the days of my life," exclaimed Sir Ira Brunton, indignantly, wiping his flushed forehead as if he himself had just made a long speech. "It actually forestalls the verdict of the jury; it positively amounts to an acquittal. It is the most unjust, barefaced, abominable abuse of office I ever knew in my life. The man is unfit to sit upon the

bench. He should be impeached. He must be getting into his dotage."

"Lor! Do you think so? Why I thought it was an excellent discourse—as good as a sermon. And as for being in his dotage, why how you do talk, boy. He is younger than you," said old Mrs Stilton.

"God bless Lord Elverton," exclaimed Annella, fervently; "and when he himself shall appear at the last judgment-bar, may God judge him as mercifully as he has judged that poor girl."

"You know nothing of the matter, Miss!" exclaimed the admiral, angrily. "But hush! I do believe the jury are coming in. What a little time they have taken. But oh, of course their going out was only a form, since the charge of the judge was tantamount to an instruction to bring in a verdict of acquittal."

The jury, marshaled by the bailiffs, were already in court. All eyes were immediately turned in eager anxiety towards them, to read, if possible, in their expression the nature of the verdict they were about to render.

The faces of those twelve men were pale, stern, and downcast. It seemed ominous to the prisoner, and every eye was instantly directed towards her to observe the effect of all this upon her manner.

Eudora, no longer conscious of the hundreds of eyes fixed upon her, had half risen from her seat, thrown her veil quite back, and bent her white face towards the jury, in an agony of suspense, terrible to behold. The hand which, in rising, she had rested upon the side of the dock, was firmly grasped by Malcolm, who stood with his eyes fixed upon the face of the foreman in fierce anxiety. There was a breathless pause. And then the clerk of the arraigns arose, and demanded of the foreman of the jury whether they had agreed upon their verdict.

The foreman, a tall, fair, sensitive-looking man, hesitated for a moment, and his voice faltered, as he replied:

"We have."

The order given to the prisoner and the jury to confront each other was quite superfluous as regarded Eudora, who had never taken her wild, affrighted gaze for an instant from the faces of those who held her fate in their hands.

But to those twelve men who had young sisters, wives, or daughters of their own, it was a severe ordeal to gaze upon the white, agonized face of that poor child whose doom they were about to pronounce.

The momentous question was then put by the clerk:

"Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of the crime for which she has been indicted?"

"GUILTY."

A low, wailing cry, like the last quivering note of a broken harp-string, burst from the pale lips of the prisoner, as she fell back in her seat and covered her face with her hands.

Malcolm, with a groan that seemed to burst his heart, leaned towards her in helpless, speechless anguish.

The low sound of sobbing was heard throughout the hall among the women present.

All wished to end the torture of this scene.

At a sign from the judge, the crier called out for silence, and the clerk ordered the prisoner to stand up and receive the sentence of the court.

Eudora attempted to rise, but her limbs failed, and she sank powerless back into her seat

"Help her—lift her up," said an officer to the female turnkey that sat beside Eudora.

"Try to stand, my poor, poor child," said the good woman, putting her arms around the waist of the wretched girl, and raising her to her feet, where she stood leaning for support against the shoulder of Mrs. Barton.

And then amid the awful stillness of the hall, the venerable chief Laron arose to pronounce the doom of death. His fine face, usually so pale and woe-worn, was now con-

vulsed with an anguish even greater than the terrible occasion seemed to warrant. He appeared to be incapable of uttering more than the few frightful words that doomed the body of that poor, shrinking, fainting girl to "hang by the neck until she should be dead," and commended her soul to the mercy of that Being who alone could help her in this her utmost extremity.

Everyone looked to see how that young, delicate, sensitive creature would bear this cruel sentence. Ah! Eudora had not heard one syllable of all those awful words. The utter fainting of her heart, the sudden failing of her senses, the swift ebbing away of all her life-forces, saved her from that last torture.

And when the order was given that the prisoner should be removed from the court, the weeping woman who supported her, answered:

"My lord, she has fainted."

And in this state of insensibility, Eudora was conveyed from the court to the prison, and laid upon the iron bedstead of the condemned cell.

As the lord chief baron was leaving the court-house that night, a dark-robed woman plucked at his cloak.

"You have this day condemned an innocent girl to death!" hissed the stranger, close to his ear.

"I believe it," groaned Lord Elverton.

"It is another consequence of—"

"I know—I know!" interrupted his lordship.

"Nor will it be the last result—"

"Woman! demon! say no more! The end of these things is not here!" cried the chief baron, hastily escaping into his carriage, which immediately drove off to the Leaton Arms.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE CONDEMNED.

Condemned to death—Oh! dread
The thoughts of coming suffering—there
The scaffold stands in morning's air,
Crowds wave-like round her spread,
Their eyes upraised to see her die,
No heart to breathe a pitying sigh—
The prison stones her bed.—*Michell.*

MALCOLM MONTROSE, nearly maddened by despair, threw himself into a carriage, and drove swiftly after the prison van in which Eudora was taken back to gaol.

He was met at the prison entrance by the warden, of whom he urgently demanded:

"Where is she? How is she? Has she recovered her consciousness? Oh, Anderson! let me go to her at once!"

"Mr. Montrose, I am very sorry for you, and my heart bleeds for her; but I must do my duty, and tell you that you cannot see her," said the warden, sorrowfully.

"Why, how is this?" groaned Malcolm.

"Ah, sir! all is changed when a prisoner is condemned to death. The rules that govern us in taking care of them are very strict. From the moment sentence is passed they are cut off from the living, as one may say, and have no more to do on this earth but to use the few days left to prepare for death!" said the warden, with a heavy sigh.

"Great Heaven! Anderson, do you mean to say that no friend may go to her to try to alleviate her sufferings through this horrible calamity?"

"Sir, the gaol chaplain will visit her. Two female turnkeys will always be with her; and by applying to the

sheriff, you may obtain an order to see her, though even then only in the presence of others."

"Oh, Eudora! Eudora! has it come to this! Oh, God! what a world of chaos and horror is this, in which the innocent are sacrificed and the guilty are triumphant!" cried Malcoln distractedly.

"But there is another world, Mr. Montrose, in which the ways of God shall be justified to man," said the warden, solemnly.

"Aye, there *is* another! and thank God that this life which leads to it is short! A few more years of this mystery of iniquity—this whirling confusion in which truth is lost and good trampled to dust by evil, and each sinner's or sufferer's share in the madness of life will be over forever! Would to God it were over with that poor, sweet victim even now! Oh, would that she might never have waked again to consciousness of suffering here!" exclaimed Malcolm with impassionate earnestness.

"Mr. Montrose, you are dreadfully agitated. Pray come into my apartment and sit down, and try to compose yourself, while I go to the cell to see how she is doing and bring you word," advised the warden, opening a side door, and admitting his visitor into the office.

Malcolm paced up and down the floor with disordered steps until the return of the warden from his errand.

"Well, sir, how is she?" he hurriedly inquired as Mr. Anderson entered.

"Lying still in a deep swoon," replied the warden.

"Thank Heaven! every hour of that swoon is a respite from anguish! Oh, that while she is in it her spirit may pass peacefully away to Heaven! Who is with her?"

"Mrs. Barton and my wife. They are doing all that they possibly can for her relief, and believe me Mr. Montrose, every care and comfort shall be given her that her unhappy condition and our painful duty will permit. I would do as much, sir, for the poorest and most

friendless stranger that might be committed to my charge, to say nothing of the daughter of the noblest man I ever saw and the best friend I ever had," said the warden, earnestly.

"I am sure you would, And—I hope you do not believe her guilty?"

The warden winced. Since the disclosures of the trial his faith in the innocence of Eudora was much shaken. He would gladly have evaded the inquiry, but as the looks of Malcolm were still eagerly questioning him, he was obliged to answer:

"I do not know what to believe, sir. As the daughter of her father, I should say she could not be, sir; but then her mother was an East-Indian, and no one knows what venom, might have mixed with the good old Leaton blood in crossing it with *that* breed."

"That is enough!" You cannot help believing what all the world, except a very few, believe. Oh, Heaven! my poor Eudora, that even your dead mother's race should rise up in evidence against you! But we must be patient; aye, patient until the very judgment-day, when all shall be made clear! Would to God that it were to-morrow! Where can the sheriff be found this evening, that I may go to him at once to get that order you spoke of?"

"He is in the village now, staying at the Leaton Arms. But, Mr. Montrose, you cannot in any case see Miss Leaton before to-morrow morning, for the hour for closing has already arrived, and it is against the rules to open to anyone."

Deep grief is never irritable, else Malcolm might have uttered an imprecation on the rules, instead of asking, with quiet despair:

"How early in the morning may I be admitted?"

"With the sheriff's order, at any time after nine."

With this answer Malcolm bowed, and again earnestly

commending Eudora to the care of the warden, took his leave.

He first went and secured the order from the sheriff, and then sought out Mr. Fenton, who was staying at the same over-crowded inn. He found the unsuccessful advocate in deep despondency. They shook hands silently, like friends meeting at a funeral, and the lawyer began to say:

"I did all that man and the law could do to save her, but—" His voice broke down and he could say no more.

"I know you did," moaned Malcolm.

"The evidence was too strong for us—"

"But not too strong for your faith in her."

"No, no; I am an old practitioner with a long experience among criminals, and I could stake my salvation that that child is not guilty—"

"Despite her East-Indian blood?"

"Yes; and, if there were time, something might even yet be done to save her—"

"Fenton!" exclaimed Malcolm, starting forward and gazing with breathless eagerness, in the lawyer's face.

"I mean, though the detectives we have hitherto employed have failed to discover the least clue to this hideous mystery, yet if there were more time, we might engage others who might be more successful."

"More time! Oh, God! When is the day of her—martyrdom ordered?"

"This day, fortnight, I understand."

Malcolm recoiled and sank into his seat. There was silence between them for a few minutes, and then Malcolm suddenly exclaimed:

"Fenton, I know it is a desperate chance, but I cannot bear to have her perish without another effort. Draw up a petition for a respite, and after I have seen her to-morrow, I will myself take it up to town, and lay it before the Home Secretary."

"I will do so, and get as many signatures as I can in

the meanwhile," replied the lawyer, feeling a sense of relief at the thought of doing anything, however hopeless y, for his unhappy client; and knowing besides, that if it did Eudora no good, it might help to console Malcolm with the thought that nothing had been left untried to save her.

They talked over the terms of the petition, and then Malcolm, leaving the lawyer to draw up the document, took his departure.

Loathing the thought of rest while Eudora lay in the condemned cell, he bent his steps towards the prison, and spent the night in walking up and down before the walls that confined the unhappy girl.

Meanwhile Eudora lay extended on the iron bed of the condemned cell. She was still in a deep swoon; her form was rigid, her features livid, her pulse still.

The two watchers, while conscientiously doing all they could to restore her sensibilities, silently hoped that she might never more awake to suffering, but that her soul might pass in that insensibility. During that long, deep trance, her spirit must have wandered far back over leagues of space, and years of time to the beautiful land of her birth, and the days of her childhood, for when at dawn of morning she recovered her senses, she looked around her with eyes full of the innocent, soft light of girlhood, modified only by a slight surprise.

"What place is this? Where am I?" those eyes seemed to inquire, as she gently raised herself on her elbow to examine the cell.

The watchers were silent from awe and pity; but the narrow stone walls, the iron door, the grated window, sternly though mutely answered the questioning gaze.

And as the truth slowly grew upon her memory, her face changed from its look of girlish curiosity to one of terror and anguish, and with a piercing cry, she fell back upon the pillow, and covered her eyes with her hands.

The kind women that filled to her the double office of

warders and attendants, took her hands from her face, and began to address her with words of sympathy; but what words of theirs had power to reach her heart, snatched far away from ordinary human comprehension as she was by her great woe!

She never answered, or even seemed to hear them. After the first sharp cry that marked her returning consciousness, she lay in silent anguish.

And so the hours of the morning crept slowly on until the rising sunbeams glanced into the cell. Then the two weary watchers were relieved by Mrs. Barton, who came in and sent them to take some rest, while she herself remained to put the cell in order, and assist the nearly dying girl to get on her clothes.

"Come, my poor dear, it is better for you to try to rouse yourself a little. Rise up and bathe your face in this nice cool water, and then dress yourself, for some of your friends will be getting an order from the sheriff to come and see you, they will, and you should be ready to receive them," said Mrs. Barton, as she poured the water into the basin, and took the hand of Eudora to assist her to rise.

In mute despair the poor girl suffered herself to be guided. Silently she followed all Mrs Barton's directions.

"Come, come, don't give up so; while there's life there's hope; and I myself have known more nor one person pardoned or commuted after they've been condemned to death," continued the good woman, trying to comfort the prisoner while assisting at her toilet.

But the shuddering young creature seemed incapable of reply.

"Oh, dear, dear! what can I say to you? Can't you still trust in God?" sighed the woman.

No, Eudora could not. Innocent, yet condemned, she felt her faith in God and man utterly fail; and lacking this support in her hour of extremity, she sank beneath her weight of affliction; and as soon as she was dressed and

out of the hands of Mrs. Barton, she fell again upon the bed, and buried her head in the pillow.

Her breakfast was brought her by another turnkey, and Mrs. Barton took it from his hand and set it on the little table, while she entreated the prisoner to rise up and try to partake of it. And Eudora, in the perfect docility of her spirit, sat up on the side of the bed, and took the cup of coffee in her hand and attempted to drink it, but in vain; and then, with a deprecating look she handed the cup back to Mrs. Barton, and sank down upon the bed. The good woman saw that she could not swallow, and so she sent the untasted breakfast away.

A few minutes after this, Malcolm Montrose, attended by the governor of the gaol, came to the cell. Mr. Anderson left him at the door, and retired to a short distance in the lobby.

Malcolm had forced himself into a state of composure, and nothing but the deadly paleness of his face betrayed his inward anguish.

When he entered the cell Eudora was still lying on the outside of the bed, with her face buried in the pillow, while the female turnkey stood by her side.

"How is she?" breathed the visitor, in the hushed tones of deep woe.

"Oh, sir, she has not uttered one word, or swallowed one morsel since her conviction. Speak to her, sir; perhaps she will answer you," said Mrs. Barton.

"Do *you* speak to her; tell her that I am here," requested Malcolm, in a faltering voice, as he struggled to retain an outward composure.

The woman bent over the stricken girl, and whispered:

"Miss Leaton, dear, here is your cousin, Mr. Montrose, come to see you. Won't you turn and look at him?"

The name of Malcolm broke the spell of dumb despair that bound her. Starting up, she caught the hands of her

cousin in both her own, and gazing in an agony of supplication in his face, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Malcolm, save me from this fate! No one will save me unless you do!"

He dropped upon his knees beside the bed, and bowed his head upon her clinging hands, and answered, in a broken voice:

"Eudora, all that man can do shall be done to save you! I would pour out my heart's best blood to deliver you."

"Malcolm," she exclaimed, still clinging to his hands as the drowning cling to the last plank, and gazing down on his bowed face, with her eyes dilated and blazing between wild terror and mad hope, "Malcolm, I did not do what they say I must die for! you *know* I did not! Oh, surely there must be some way to prove it—some way that you can find out! Oh, Malcolm! try—try hard to save me from this fate! Oh! do not think that I am a coward, Malcolm! It is not death I fear. I should not dread dying in my bed with some devoted friend beside me, as sweet Agatha died! But to be hung! to die a violent, struggling, shameful death, with all the people looking at me!—oh! for Heaven's sake, Malcolm, save me from such maddening horror!"

"Eudora! child! love! it is not necessary for you to urge me so earnestly. I would give my body to be burned if that would save you! and all that human power can accomplish shall be tried to deliver you. I have not been idle since your conviction. Already I have set on foot a scheme by which I hope to serve you!" replied Malcolm.

"Oh, Malcolm, devoted friend, before you came in I feared that even God had forsaken me, but now I do not think so. Your plan, dear friend, what is it?"

Mr. Montrose had not intended to tell her of his mission to London, lest he should only raise false hopes; but it was not possible to behold her agonizing terror of pain and shame, or hear her earnest appeals for comfort and deliver-

ance, without immediately responding and yielding her hope.

"I have a petition drawn up, praying the Crown to respite you during her Majesty's pleasure; I shall take the petition to London and lay it before the Home Secretary. If he favors it, as I hope, and trust, and believe he will, it will give us time to investigate this dark mystery, discover the criminal and deliver you."

"Oh, Malcolm, do you think he will?" cried Eudora, with clasped hands.

"I shall know, dearest in twenty-four hours. I shall take the first train, to London, that starts at ten o'clock. I came here to see you before setting out, and to implore you to trust in God, to pray to him, and to keep up your spirits until I return."

"Will you be gone long?" asked Eudora, still clinging to his hands.

"Two or three days perhaps; but I will write to you by every mail, and telegraph you the moment I get a favorable answer."

"Oh, may God speed your errand!" she exclaimed, fervently clasping her hands.

"Amen. And now, dear one, I have but twenty minutes to catch the train. Eudora, in parting with you for a short time, I would recommend you to see the chaplain of the prison. He is a truly righteous man, and his conversation will do you good."

"I will see him, if only to please you," she answered.

"And, now, dear one, good-bye for the present, and may the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the innocent, watch over you!" said Malcolm, lifting her hands to his lips with reverential tenderness before leaving the cell.

Half an hour later Malcolm, with the petition in his pocket, was steaming onward in the express train for London.

It was soon known throughout the town that Mr

Montrose had gone to the city with a memorial to the Crown for a respite or commutation of Eudora Leaton's sentence; but not one human being that discussed the subject believed for one instant that his desperate enterprise could possibly be successful.

The chaplain of the gaol was the Reverend William Goodall, a grave, gentle, sympathetic young man, who greatly feared that the youthful prisoner was really guilty, and earnestly desired to bring her into a state of hopeful penitence.

With this view, early in the afternoon, he visited Eudora in her cell, and sought by every argument to counteract the effect of that false hope which had been raised in her breast, and which he firmly believed was the only thing that withheld her from repentance and confession.

But to all his exhortations the unhappy girl responded:

"Oh, sir, this one little hope is the only vital nerve that quivers in my bosom; kill it, and you destroy me, even before the appointed death-day! Oh, Mr. Goodall, leave me this little hope!"

"But, my poor child," said the young minister, gazing with the deepest compassion upon the almost infantile face of the girl, "it is false, delusive expectation, that is luring you on to certain and everlasting destruction of soul as well as body, by keeping you from that full confession and repentance which is your only chance of salvation."

"But it does not, Mr. Goodall. I have nothing to confess or repent; at least, nothing but my common share in erring human nature; and for redemption from that I have been taught to trust in God's mercy through our Saviour."

The young minister groaned in spirit as he replied:

"But, poor, blind child, while you keep a guilty secret in your breast, that mercy cannot reach you; and while a single hope of life is left you here, you will not part with

that secret. Abandon all such delusive hopes, Eudora; confess, repent, and cherish these heavenly hopes of pardon and redemption that never yet deceived a penitent sinner"

"It is useless for us to talk longer, I fear; we speak only at cross-purposes. You believe me guilty, and urge me to abandon all the expectations of mercy in this world, and to confess crimes that I never committed; while I know that I am innocent, and upon that knowledge found all my anticipations of deliverance. I am sorry that we cannot agree; for I do need religious consolation and support, but it must be administered by one who is a sufficiently subtle 'discerner of spirits' to recognize the truth when I speak it," said Eudora, with gentle dignity.

The young minister drove his fingers through his dark hair, and gathered his brows into a deep frown, not of anger, but of intense perplexity; for the clear, unflinching gaze of her eyes, the calm, unwavering tones of her voice, and the keen and powerful aura of truth that seemed to emanate from her whole presence shook his convictions of her guilt. He felt the necessity of withdrawing from this disturbing influence in order to examine his own conscience. Rising, he took her hand, and said:

"My poor child, I will leave you for the present; but I shall not cease to bear you upon my heart to the Throne of Grace, and I will come to you again in the evening."

And then he left the cell.

Eudora clung to her little hope as the young cling to life. She had called it the only vital nerve that quivered in her bosom. Yet it would be scarcely true to say that she was the happier for it.

The days of Malcolm's absence were passed by her in a high fever of suspense. By every mail she received letters from him assuring her of his undying devotion and zealous efforts in her behalf, and entreating her still to pray and to trust.

The chaplain also kept his word, and visited her frequently, still exhorting her, with tearful earnestness, to resign all expectations of earthly life, and to turn her thoughts towards heaven. But still Eudora clung with death-like tenacity to her hopes of deliverance.

"You think that I am sinking fast in this stormy sea of trouble that threatens to overwhelm me, and you ask me to let go the slender plank that keeps me up, and to resign myself to death—but I will not! I will cling to this plank of life! I will not let it go! I will grasp it—I will possess it—it shall save me!" was still Eudora's answer to all the young minister's fervent exhortations.

"Ah, well! I see it is in vain to reason with you in your present mood of mind. You still insanely hope against hope. But when Mr. Montrose returns without the respite you expect, and you feel that your fate in this world is sealed, when death stares you in the face, you will listen to my counsels, disburden your bosom of its guilty secret, and give your soul to repentance," was ever the minister's final reply when he concluded each visit.

Alas! these interviews were productive of little satisfaction to either party.

Eudora could derive no comfort from the conversation of even a good minister, who founded all his exhortations upon the mistaken theory of her guilt; and Mr. Goodall almost despaired of benefitting one whom he considered an obstinate sinner, wickedly refusing to confess and repent.

But as the weary days passed, Eudora felt more keenly the protracted anguish of suspense, and the increasing difficulty of holding fast the little hope that sustained her; for, although Malcolm continued to write to her by every mail, and in every letter endeavored to keep up her courage, yet he gave her no definite information. His stay was protracted from day to day, as though he were engaged in prosecuting an almost desperate enterprise which he was resolved to accomplish.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### DESPAIR.

She looked how pallid there!
Not starting, sighing, weeping now;
The quiet anguish of her brow
Was written by Despair.
Ah me! despite a governed breast,
Seeming the while in placid rest,
What anguish soul may bear!—*Mich. H.*

When Malcolm had been gone a week, and Eudora's life was almost worn out by the long-drawn anguish of hope deferred, she was sitting in the morning in her cell, in danger of dropping once more into the death-like torpor of despair, when the door was opened by the governor, who announced:

"A friend to see Miss Leaton," and retired.

Eudora sprang forward, expecting to meet Malcolm Montrose, but she found herself confronted with a stranger—a very young, slight, graceful girl, dressed in simple but elegant mourning, and deeply veiled; and even when the stranger threw aside her veil Eudora failed to recognize in this elegantly-dressed young lady Annella Wilder, the tipsy captain's half-starved daughter, whom she had befriended in the poor London lodgings.

"You do not know me, Miss Miller—I mean Miss Leaton—and I—oh!" began Annella, but losing her self-command, she burst into tears, and threw herself in the arms of Eudora, who, weakened by long, intense suffering, sat down in her chair, and would have drawn the girl to her bosom, but Annella sank to the floor, and dropped her head on Eudora's lap, sobbing violently.

Miss Leaton could not understand this excessive emotion. She recollected Annella's unfortunate barrack education,

her utter destitution after her father's death, and her wild flight from London; and seeing now the costliness of her attire, and being totally ignorant of the change in her circumstances, the mind of Eudora was filled with the darkest fears for Annella. But if she should find that this young, friendless, and inexperienced girl had really come to grief, Eudora resolved to befriend her as far as possible by interesting the noble-hearted Malcolm in her fate to save her from irremediable ruin. While these thoughts coursed through the young prisoner's mind, she gently untied her visitor's bonnet and laid it on the bed, and softly caressed the bowed head, while she inquired, in a low voice:

"What is the matter, dear Annella? I am not so utterly bewildered by my own woe but that I may be able to comfort you. Tell me what trouble you are in, and if I cannot help you very long myself, because I may have to die next Wednesday, I can leave you to one who will be a brother to you for my sake."

"Oh, Miss Leaton, Miss Leaton, say no more! Every word you speak goes through my heart like a spear!" cried Annella, breaking into harder sobs.

"No, no, don't say so! I wish only to do you good. Tell me the nature of the difficulty you are in," said Eudora, gently caressing the weeping girl.

"Oh! I am in no difficulty myself; it is all right enough with me personally, and far better than I deserve, Heaven forgive me! And even if it were not, how could I think of my good-for-nothing self while you are in such terrible straits!" cried Annella, wildly sobbing.

"Then do not weep for me, kind girl; it can do no good, you see."

"Oh, but you don't know how much reason I have to weep—yes, tears of blood, Eudora; for it was I that did it! I! I!"

"*You!*—did what?" asked Eudora, in astonishment.

"Betrayed you, as Judas did his master, wretch that I am! I wish *I* was hung!" cried Annella, amid choking sobs.

"You?—betrayed me? I do not understand you in the least."

"I set the police on your track, mean scamp, that I am! I told them where to find you! I gave you up! Oh! if there is any marrying down below, they ought to wed me to Judas Iscariot!"

"But—how could you have known that I was Eudora Leaton of whom they were in pursuit?" inquired the deeply-shocked girl.

"I *didn't* know it! I was not so irredeemably bad as *that* either! Perhaps even Judas did not know all the evil he was doing when he betrayed his Master. If I had known it I would have bit my own tongue off rather than told it. But I had to chatter about you and describe you, and tell all I knew of you, until I raised suspicion, and they went and arrested you; and that was the return you got for your kindness to me! Oh, I wish somebody would strangle me, for I am too wicked and unlucky to live!" exclaimed Annella, with streaming tears and suffocating gasps.

"But, poor girl, if you did not know what you were doing you have nothing to reproach yourself with," said Eudora, kindly stroking her bowed hair; for all this time Annella's head lay in the lap of the prisoner.

"Yes, yes, I have; conscience is the true judge, and it assures me that ignorance is no excuse; and that instinct should have taught me silence. I came here to confess this to you, Miss Leaton; to let you know how wicked I have been; but not to ask you to pardon me. I do not want you to do that; I do not wish even the Lord to do it—I would much rather be punished," exclaimed Annella, hysterically.

"Dear girl, do not talk so wildly. You have done

nothing to require pardon. If you were unconsciously the means of my arrest, it was not your fault."

"But if you should perish, I should feel as if I were your murderer. But you shall not perish! I hear that Mr. Montrose is in London, petitioning the Crown for a respite. I hope he will succeed; but even if he should not, mind, Miss Leaton, you shall not perish! I swear it before High Heaven!" exclaimed Annella, wiping her eyes, and looking up.

"You must believe me innocent, or you would never speak with such confidence."

"Believe! I *know* you are; and if everyone else fails, *I* will save you—I *will*, if I die for it! I pledge my soul's salvation to that!"

"Alas! poor child, look at these thick walls and heavy locks; how could you help me?"

"I do not know yet *how*, but I *do* know that I *will* somehow!—as the Lord hears me, I will!"

"I take the disposition for the deed, and thank you as much as if you were able to keep your word; and above all, I bless you that you do me the justice to believe me guiltless. Ah, dear girl, I have been so tortured by the chaplain of this prison, who thinks me guilty, and urges me to confess. It is so distressing to be thought such a monster by so good a man."

"Good, is he, and yet believes you guilty? Then he does not know a white dove from a black crow, which is tantamount to saying that his reverence is a fool, begging his pardon. But indeed most of the good people I know *are* fools. It seems as if nature were so impartial in the distribution of her gifts, that she seldom endows the same individual with both wisdom and goodness at the same time. There's my three grannies, I mean the male granny and the two female grannies, all with such good hearts, but la! such weak heads. Anybody can whirl their minds round and round as the wind does the weathercocks. La!

you shall judge for yourself. At the trial, when the prosecuting attorney-general was abusing you, he carried them along with himself until they believed you to be a perfect demon of iniquity. Then, when your counsel was defending you, he carried them along with himself, until they believed you to be a persecuted cherub. Then, when the judge summed up both sides, they were equally drawn by opposite opinions, and could not make up their minds whether you were an angel or a devil. Finally, when the jury brought in their verdict, they comfortably decided that you were the latter, and so went home happy to supper and bed. La! and we are requested *always* to respect our elders!"

"Certainly, dear Annella," said Eudora, gravely.

"Wish they were always respectable, then."

"Annella, you shock me, dear; old age must be reverenced."

"Can't help it. I haven't got a particle of reverence in my composition; it is all owing to my barrack bringing up, I suppose.

"I suppose it is, poor girl; but, Annella, you seem to have found friends."

"Reckon I have; three grannies, I told you."

"Whom?"

"I'll tell you. As I was trying to make out Allworth Abbey, what do I do but fall over an old servant, half-sailor, half-valet, who caught me trespassing on private grounds, and hauled me up before his master, like a vagrant before a magistrate; and when I told my story, who does the old gent turn up to be but my own granny, who was living in that fine house the Anchorage, with two other old ladies, also my grannies."

"The Anchorage; then you must speak of Sir Ira Brunton and his family?" said Eudora in astonishment.

"Just. He quarrelled with my mother and father, and cast them off, but he took me in when he found me dragged

over his threshold. Shall I tell you all the particulars? Would it interest you?"

"Very much, indeed," said Eudora, forgetting for the moment her own awful situation in her interest in Annella's fortunes.

The girl began and related her adventures as they are already known to the reader.

The narrative won the prisoner from the contemplation of her own sorrows, and at its close she put out her hand and took that of Annella, saying:

"I am very glad for your sake dear."

"*But I am not*," exclaimed Annella, recurring to her cause of grief and remorse. "I had rather remained in London, and have met all that I most dreaded—the union, a vulgar task-mistress, beggary, anything, rather than have come down here to betray you. But I did not mean it, Eudora; oh, indeed I did not! I would have died rather than have brought you to this. But I did not even suspect your identity until I recognized you in the court-room, and even then I did not know that I had had any hand in your arrest until I got home that evening, and Tabitha Tabs, the lady's-maid, told me it was all my doings; that it was from my talk that they had gained the clue to your hiding-place; and oh, Eudora, I felt that she was telling the truth, and I felt as if I had been knocked down with a club, and I have been ill ever since. If I had been well, do you think I would have stayed away from you so long?"

"No, dear Annella; but I wonder you got leave to visit me at all."

"I believe you; it was very difficult. First I asked my grandfather to bring me, but he refused and blowed me up in the bargain; then I watched my opportunity and put on my bonnet and walked straight here, and the governor refused to admit me without an order from the sheriff; then I went and hunted up the sheriff, and asked him if he

would give me an order to see you, and he roared out 'No,' as if he would have bit my head off for asking him, and then I went to the prison chaplain, and told him what a kind friend you had been to me, and what a traitor I had been to you, and how broken my heart was, and I cried, and begged and prayed him to get an order for me, and he got it from the sheriff and gave it to me, and so here I am. But I did not come for nothing, Eudora, I said you should not perish, and you shall not, as Heaven hears me," added Annella, in a low whisper, as she glanced jealously over her shoulder at Mrs. Barton, who was squeezing herself tightly into the farthest corner of the little cell, to be as far off as her office would permit.

"What is that woman waiting here for? It is very rude. Why does she not go away and leave us together?" inquired Annella, in a whisper.

"Dear, it is her duty to remain. I am not permitted to be left alone for an instant."

"Well, I suppose that is meant kindly, as you are in such deep trouble; but you are not alone now; I am with you, so she can go. Tell her to go."

"Dear, you mistake; it is not in kindness, but for security, that I am guarded in this way, and Mrs. Barton dares not leave me, even at my request."

"But I wish to talk to you privately; I don't want her to hear every word we say," exclaimed Annella, in a vehement whisper.

"But no one can be allowed to talk to me so; and she is here for the very purpose of hearing all that we have to say," replied Eudora, sorrowfully.

"But that is very hard."

"It is the invariable rule; and as it is a wise precaution, used in all cases such as mine, I cannot complain of it."

"But why is it used?"

"Because, Annella, if the friends of the condemned were

allowed to visit them in private, they might bring them the means of escape."

At this moment Annella became very pale, and gave an hysterical sob.

"Or," continued Eudora, "what is worse, they might bring them some instrument of self-destruction, for many a prisoner would gladly seek death in the cell rather than meet the shame and anguish of—"

Her voice choked, and she shuddered throughout her frame.

"But, would you—would you, Eudora?" questioned the girl, in an eager whisper.

"I should not dread death so much if I could meet it here in my bed—even here in prison, and alone—but I would not seek it, Annella. I would never commit crime to escape suffering."

"*Hush!* can that woman hear me when I speak as low as this?" whispered Annella, close to the ear of Eudora.

"Yes, every syllable. The round stone walls of this little cell seem formed to echo every sound. She hears even this reply."

"I wish she was hung, and I don't care if she hears that."

"Hush, she is very good to me; you must not offend her, because she only does her duty."

"Please, miss, I am not offended; I would take a'most anything from any friend of yours; it's quite nat'ral as they shoul l hate and despise me for sitting here a-keeping guard over an innocent creetur like you; sure I often hates and despises myself, and I wonder *you* don't too," said Mrs. Barton, putting her apron to her eyes and beginning to cry.

Annella wheeled around and took a good look at the woman; then suddenly putting out her hand, she said:

"I beg your pardon—I do indeed, sincerely. I ought not to have spoken as I did; but you see I am not good, and never was, nor shall be; and when my heart bleeds, my temper burns and my tongue raves."

"No offence, Miss, as I said afore; I only wonders as *she* don't mortally hate and despise me," said Mrs. Barton, wiping her eyes and sighing.

Annella, who had been gazing at Mrs Barton with intense interest, arose with a pale face, trembling limbs, and quick and gasping breath, and approaching her, whispered:

"You called Miss Leaton innocent. You believe her to be so?"

"Yes, I do; and I would not believe otherwise if all the archbishops and all the bishops, priests, and deacons in the kingdom was to swear she is guilty, and take the sacrament on it" said the woman, earnestly.

"And therefore you must see that it is very cruel she should be doomed to suffer," said Annella, eagerly.

"It's martyr'om; that's what it is."

"Hush! listen!" continued Annella, bending low; "you would like to see her free of this place, would you not?"

"Oh, wouldn't I though! Sure, I pray for her deliverance every night and morning on my knees," sobbed Mrs. Barton.

"And—you would help her to escape, if a good plan was laid, and it was all safe for you?" inquired Annella, in a low, breathless whisper.

"Eh?"

"If you could do it safely, without endangering yourself, you would connive at her escape, would you not?"

"Eh? What? I don't understand you; but I would do anything in the world I could for her. Sure, she knows that without my telling her."

"Well, then, listen! But stop—what hours do you watch with her?"

"From six to twelve in the morning, and then from six to twelve at night."

"Very well; no, if I were to come again to-morrow morning while you have the watch, couldn't you contrive to turn your back and shut your eyes and pretend to drop

asleep while I change clothes with her, and let her walk out closely veiled in my place?"

"Eh! What! No, Miss."

"But why?"

"Lawk, Miss, I dar'n't."

"Oh, you need not be afraid of consequences; there would be no danger to you. You might be suspected, but you could not be convicted, for no one on earth could prove that, overcome by fatigue you didn't fall asleep; and so the worse that could befall you would be the loss of your place—for I do suppose they would not keep a female warder who was addicted to falling asleep on her watch. But, Mrs. Barton, any loss you might sustain, should be made up to you a hundredfold."

"'Taint that, Miss; I ain't afeared of nothink but doing wrong. I dar'n't let her escape."

"But it would be a meritorious act, helping the innocent to evade unmerited death."

"So it would, Miss, under some circumstances; but, you see, when I took this place, I pledged myself to obey the laws, and to watch over the safe custody of the prisoners under my charge. And so I dar'n't break my word, or betray my trust, Miss—no, not even to save her precious life, as it melts my heart to see her suffer so," said Mrs. Barton, putting her apron up to her face, and beginning to cry again.

"Not if I was to offer you five hundred pounds—a thousand pounds?"

"Not if so be as you were to offer me ten thousand, Miss," sobbed the woman.

"Look at Eudora, then; if you won't let her go, only look at her," said Annella, artfully.

Mrs. Barton dropped her apron, and turned her eyes towards the prisoner, who sat upon the side of her bed, with her head bent forward, her cheeks flushed, her lips apart, her eyes strained outward, and her hands clasped and extended in mute, eloquent appeal for freedom.

"I can't look at her; it cleaves my heart in two, it does!" sobbed Mrs. Barton, covering her face again.

With a sudden impulse, Eudora started forward, and clasped the hand of her warder, exclaiming:

"Oh, listen to her! Listen to my friend! Give me leave to get away if I can; give me this one *little* chance of life. Think—I have got but one week to live; one short week, and then I am to die such a horrible death! Oh, pity me! let me go!"

"Oh, this is dreadful—dreadful! I would do anything in the world for you, poor child; but I dar'n't do this—I dar'n't betray my trust, replied Mrs. Barton, wildly weeping.

"Suppose I was your own child, you would let me go—you would risk your soul's salvation to free me; or, if I had a mother, she would move heaven and earth to save me—but I am motherless. Oh, pity me as if I were your child, and let me go!"

"I darn't; Lord help me, I darn't. And even if I did, poor dear, it wouldn't save you; you'd be known and tuk up again afore you got outside of the prison gates. Lawk, yes; afore you even got to the head o' the stairs o' this very ward; and then your case would be worse nor it is now."

"It *could not* be worse; and if the chance is ever so small, still it *is* one. Oh, give me this little, little chance of life! I do not deserve to die this horrible death."

"I'd rather die this minute myself than refuse you. I mustn't be a traitor. Sure, you wouldn't have me go agin my conscience?"

Without another word Eudora turned and sat down on the bed, dropped her clasped hands upon her lap, her pale face upon her breast, and sat in an attitude and expression of blended shame and resignation.

"How could you be so hard-hearted and cruel?" exclaimed Annella.

"I'm not so, Miss; contrariwise, it a'most breaks my heart to refuse her, but even so I must do my duty," sobbed Mrs Barton, with her apron once more at her eyes.

"Oh, bother your duty," exclaimed Annella, with indignant vehemence. "That word is as good as a dose of tartar-emetic to me, for I do believe there is more sin committed in the name of duty than ever has been perpetrated at the instigation of any devil in Pandemonium from Moloch down. I am not as old as the north star, but even I have noticed all my life, when anyone is going to do anything so abominably wicked or shamefully mean that Satan himself would blush to own it, they father it upon duty."

"Well, duty is not the less sacred nor incumbent upon us on that account. Many ill deeds have been done in the name of the Most High, but we do not, for that, worship the Divine name the less," said Eudora, reverently.

"Oh, Miss, I hopes you do not think as I am a hypocrite as acts wicked an' mean in the presence of duty?" asked Mrs. Barton, still sobbing.

"No, I am sure you acted conscientiously in refusing to aid my escape. It was I who did wrong. I ought not to have made such an appeal to you, or worked upon your feelings, or tempted your fidelity. But I was carried away by my emotions—I forgot myself—I acted upon the impulse of the moment. The temptation was so strong—death seemed so bitter, life so sweet," said Eudora, with a deep sigh.

"Oh, how can you be so cruel as still to refuse to let her go? Even supposing it would be wrong, you might do a *little* wrong for mercy's sake, and to save her from perishing," pleaded Annella.

"Do not tempt her farther, dear. God is omnipotent; if He wills He can deliver me, but to tempt His creatures is no way to gain His favor," said Eudora.

"That's it, Miss; do right, and trust in Him as can save even at the eleventh hour," commented Mrs. Barton,

wiping her eyes. "And now listen; I hear the other warder coming. Don't attempt to talk to her as you have to me, for *she* would think it *her* place to report the conversation to the governor."

At this moment, without an instant's warning, the door was unlocked, Mrs. Barton peremptorily called out, and her substitute admitted.

The new-comer was a stern, "grim-visaged" woman, who took her seat with the stolid indifference of one long hardened to her cruel office.

Annella, not daring, for Eudora's sake, to speak freely before this she-dragon, yet had not the heart to take leave of her unhappy friend. She sat down beside her on the cot, and silently took and held her hand. She remained as long as she possibly could do so, and then, in parting, promised to re-visit Eudora, if permitted, the next day.

With the departure of the wild, though true-hearted girl, a sunbeam seemed to have been withdrawn from the cell.

During her visit, Eudora's agonizing consciousness of her situation had been suspended, or modified.

Nature, indeed, the most tender of mothers, never permits her children to endure a long continued strain of suffering, whether of mind or body. She makes the tortured victim faint upon the rack, and in unconsciousness lose the sense of physical agony. She gives the mourner long intervals of stupor, distraction of hope, to alleviate the effect of mental anguish.

Such a blessing had come to Eudora with the entrance of Annella, but had gone with her exit After the departure of her visitor, all the full realization of her dreadful position rushed back upon the mind of Eudora and overwhelmed her, and she sank upon the bed in the collapse of despair

She had not remained thus many minutes before the door was once more unlocked, another "friend to see Miss Leaton" announced, and Malcolm Montrose entered the cell.

Forgetting everything else, Eudora started up and sprang towards him, exclaiming:

"Oh, Malcolm, have you come at last? What a weary, weary time you have been away! God bless you, I am so glad to see you! But, oh, Malcolm! will they let me live? Quick, tell me if you will!"

He could not answer her; he pressed her hand with an unconsciously cruel force, while he turned away his face in silent misery.

She looked at him in sudden terror, and in the written agony of his brow she read the truth. Her beating heart grew still as death; her flushed cheek turned pale as marble, and she sank upon her seat and covered her face with her hands.

He sat down by her side, took one of her hands in his own, and essayed to speak; but his voice refused its office.

Then with that wonderful strength which comes even to the weakest woman in the direst distress, she controlled her own agitation, and wishing to save him the pain of announcing the fatal intelligence, she quietly said:

"I am to die."

He pressed her hand in mute despair, and not another word was spoken between them. They sat with clasped hands side by side, until the hour of closing the prison separated them. Then, in taking leave, Malcolm, with a broken voice, faltered forth:

"I will see you again, to-morrow."

She answered:

"Come."

And so they parted.

That evening it was known throughout the town that the petition for a respite or commutation of Eudora Leaton's sentence had been rejected; that all hope of saving her life was abandoned, and that the execution appointed for Wednesday morning would certainly proceed.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE APPEAL OF DESPAIR.

"A friend! and thine the ruthless part
To break the bruised reed;
Coldly to crush the trusting heart
In time of deepest need;
To quench the lingering, quivering ray,
Of Hope's just dying light,
Thus spreading o'er life's dreary way
One deep unbroken night."

THE next morning, while Malcolm Montrose sat within his private parlor at the "Leaton Arms," crushed by the failure of his last hopes, the door was suddenly thrown open, and a young girl, dressed in mourning, with a face pale as death, and a manner dreadfully agitated, hastily entered the room.

"So your mission to the Home Secretary has not succeeded!" were the first abrupt words uttered by the visitor, as she threw aside her veil, and stood before Mr. Montrose.

Malcolm sighed, and looked in surprise at this singular intruder.

"And you pretend to be in earnest in your desire to save her, yet could not accomplish your object?" exclaimed the girl in bitter, and scornful irony.

"I would have given my life for hers; I would give it now, could the gift save her!" groaned Malcolm, in deep bitterness of spirit.

"And yet you failed to obtain even a respite of her sentence!"

"Because," said Malcolm, sorrowfully, "the Home Secretary was unable, on account of the illness of the judge, who tried the case, to consult him on the subject."

"And so I suppose she must suffer on Wednesday?"

Malcolm choked, and faltered:

"Yes!"

"And you affect to love her, and yet say that? Oh! man! man! you love her not! But I love her, and I say she shall not die!" exclaimed the girl, with an impassioned earnestness that caused the young man to start and look up at her with amazement.

Clearly he supposed his strange visitor to be mad.

"She shall not die, I repeat!" said the girl, in answer to his astonished gaze.

"Who are you, young woman, who seem to take such an earnest interest in the fate of that unhappy lady?" inquired Malcolm, gently.

"One who is far too deeply in earnest to abandon Eudora Leaton to her unmerited fate; one who will save her despite of judge, jury, gaoler, and sheriff," replied the visitor.

"Alas! poor girl!" sighed Malcolm, feeling sure that he was in the presence of some compassionate young lunatic.

"See here, Mr. Malcolm Montrose. I am not beside myself, although your looks seem to say so; and although, if trouble ever crazed anybody, I should be mad!"

"But who are you, then, young woman, who are so kindly solicitous—"

"What does it matter who I am?" impatiently interrupted the visitor. "I am Annella Wilder, the granddaughter of Admiral Brunton for his sins! But that is not of the slightest consequence. What *is* of the utmost importance is my errand here to plan with you the rescue of Eudora Leaton!"

She paused for breath, for all this time she had been speaking with eager, earnest, impassioned vehemence; but as Malcolm still regarded her with a fixed, inquiring, distrustful look, she broke forth again, impatiently:

"Oh, I see you still think I am mad! but I am not. I am only nervous, anxious, and excited; and very conscious of being so! How should I be otherwise? I have slept but little since her conviction, and not at all since the last

hope of a respite failed I have lain awake night after night planning how we might free her. And scheme after scheme has surged through and through my brain, until I have grown almost wild from excitement and loss of sleep. So I scarcely wonder that you think me mad; but surely you must see now that I am not."

"Young lady, I thank you from the depths of a most grateful heart for the deep interest you take in Miss Leaton, whose misfortunes must be her only claim to your regard; for you are probably a stranger to her, and cannot know the excellence of her character," said Malcolm.

"Can't I? There you are mistaken. She is no stranger, but the dearest friend I have in the world!" exclaimed Annella, who immediately poured forth in a few vehement words the history of her acquaintance with Eudora.

All this time Annella had been standing before Malcolm, who had remained sitting.

He understood her now, and recollected himself. He arose, took her hand, and led her to a seat with respectful tenderness, saying, deprecatingly:

"I beg you will forgive me, Miss Wilder, but this heavy calamity has quite unmanned me, and made me oblivious even of the common courtesies of life."

"I know, I know," said Annella, impatiently, "but don't waste words of apology on me, I don't want that; I want your immediate co-operation in a plan for the rescue of Eudora."

"Kind girl, I thank you earnestly in Eudora's name; but any plan you might arrange I greatly fear must prove impossible of execution."

"*Do* you love her, and *can* you talk of fear and of impossibility in reference to any scheme for her deliverance?" exclaimed Annella, passionately.

"Miss Wilder, I told you that I would gladly purchase her life with my own, if I could be permitted to do so, but

for any plan for her rescue, dear girl, I can have but little hope."

"Why?"

"Ah, Miss Wilder! have you reflected upon the strength of that prison, and the vigilance and incorruptibility of its officers?"

"The strength of the prison is a hard material fact that I cannot deny; the vigilance of its officers is also very evident to the most casual observer; but their incorruptibility—bah! Voltaire, or Solomon, or Robinson Crusoe, or somebody said, that every man could be bought if you'd only pay him his own price! Now, how do you know that the officers are incorruptible? Is anybody perfect? Are you? The only question is, have you money enough to bribe the gaoler to favor her escape?"

"I do not think I have. For I do not think that any sum would bribe him."

"You do not *half* love her! But how much money have you got?" inquired Annella, with eager interest.

Malcolm paused a moment, and then answered:

"I could raise five thousand pounds."

"La! why that would buy an archbishop or a prime minister, much more a poor provincial gaoler!"

"You have a bad opinion of human nature."

"Got a right to. The only human being with whom I am intimately acquainted—and that's myself—I *know* deserves to be put in a pillory; and all the rest except a few ought to be hung! But try the gaoler with the offer of five thousand pounds. That sum will be an irresistible inducement to a man in his circumstances—especially if you can convince him of what I believe to be the truth—that he will be doing a meritorious act in assisting the escape of an innocent girl."

"Really, your reasoning has a certain plausibility in it. 'The drowning catch at straws,' and I am inclined to seize

upon your idea. What is the plan of escape that you wish that the gaoler should be brought to favor?"

"I said *bought* to favor! Oh, it is a very simple one. I go to the prison closely veiled. I propose to change dress with Eudora, and let her walk out in my gown, mantle, bonnet, and veil, while the gaoler, upon some pretence or another draws off the warders to some other part of the building, so that she can pass out uninterruptedly. And you could have a close carriage somewhere near, put her into it, and drive at once to the sea-coast, where you must have a fishing-smack already hired to take her away. Meanwhile, when they come to look for her, they find me!

"But do you know, kind girl, even if your plan should succeed, what would be the penalty to yourself for assisting the escape of a convicted prisoner?" inquired Malcolm, gravely.

"No, nor care! They couldn't hang me, and even if they could, I shouldn't mind a little hanging in the cause of a friend!" said Annella, cheerfully, for her spirits were rising with sanguine hopes of success.

"They would transport you for life!"

"Well, let them, if it would be any comfort to them for the escape of Eudora! It would only be giving me a free passage to Australia, and I want to see the world. I dare say Botany Bay is not the worst place on the face of the earth. They say convicts there in a very short time are able to retire on ample fortunes. In a word, I should be transported with joy to be sent over for Miss Leaton's sake. 'Variety is the spice of existence,' and that would be one of the spices!" said Annella, gaily, for in Malcolm's evident acquiescence her spirits were rising.

"Your plan shall be tried," said Mr. Montrose, gravely, "the more readily that I do not believe you would really come to harm through it. But are you sure that even if you win over the gaoler, you have courage to act out your own part? Remember that yours is far the most perilous

part of all. My hand would scarcely be seen in it. The gaoler, with five thousand pounds, could afford to leave the country, but you would be found in the cell, and have to face—"

"The music of the row they'd raise! I know it I'm not afraid. Go ahead. I'll do my part," said Annella, bravely.

"If the peril were all my own—"

"Now you are at your doubts and hesitations again. Think of Eudora's peril, and act with decision."

"You are right, Eudora only should be thought of now, but when she is once in safety, my dear girl, I will devote all my energies to helping you out of any trouble you may get into upon her account," replied Malcolm.

"Thank you kindly, but I will not trouble you. I shall help myself, as I have done all my life. I had a great deal rather you would tell me when we shall begin to help Eudora," said Annella, bravely.

"Immediately. I was only waiting here for the hour of opening the prison to arrive. Now, by the time we can walk thither it will have come, and we can be admitted. I shall go at once to the gaoler, and in a private interview, open my plan to him. You, meanwhile, can visit Eudora in her cell; but I beseech you, say not one word of the plan of deliverance to her until we discover whether the gaoler can be induced to favor it, for the subject might only agitate with vain hopes a soul that is piously trying to resign itself to death," said Montrose.

"Why, do you think me an idiot? Of course I should say nothing to her prematurely, even if I had the opportunity, which I should not have, as one of those women warders is always on guard over her."

"True; but if the governor can be induced to co-operate with us, he will make some opportunity for me to convey the news to Eudora. Then I will hurry away, and make every arrangement for the flight, which may be accom-

plished to-morrow," said Montrose, rising, and taking his hat and gloves.

They immediately left the hotel, and walked rapidly on to the prison, exhibited the sheriff's order, and were at once admitted.

While they waited for a minute in the hall, for some turnkey to attend them, Annella inquired in a breathless whisper:

"After your interview with the governor, you will come immediately to Eudora?"

"Certainly."

"But one of the warders will be with her, and you cannot speak of it before either of them, how, then, shall I know whether your appeal has been successful?"

"By my face! Could I, with all the self-control of my nature, repress the satisfaction you would read there if I had succeeded, or the despair you would see there if I had failed?"

"But you will *not* fail. You are sure to succeed," said Annella, impatiently.

At this moment a turnkey came forward with his bunch of keys.

"Be kind enough to say to the governor that I wish to see him, and then conduct this young lady to Miss Leaton's presence," said Montrose.

The officer bowed, opened a side door, and announced:

"A gentleman to see the governor."

Then touching his hat to Annella, he led the way up the heavy staircase to the upper wards in which the condemned cells were located.

Meanwhile, Malcolm entered the office of the governor, who was seated at a desk engaged in writing, but immediately arose, with an earnest expression of sympathy and respect, to meet his visitor.

"Mr. Montrose, still looking so harassed and ill, and no wonder! You could endure it better in your own person,

I know that, but try still to bear up, even for her sake. Time carries away the sharpest griefs as well as the sweetest joys. A few more days and all this agony for you and her will be over for ever. She will be at rest, with her it will be well. If she is guiltless, as I hope she is, and suffers unjustly, as I fear she must, God will abundantly compensate her in another world. When all is over you must travel, and time, philosophy and religion will heal the wounds of your heart. Sit down here, Mr. Montrose, and let me offer you something," said the governor, placing a cushioned arm-chair for his visitor, and moving towards that buffet where he kept liquors for exigencies like this.

"I thank you—no, I require nothing of that sort. But, Mr. Anderson, I wish to have a private interview with you. Will you be kind enough to turn the key in that door, so that we may not be interrupted?" inquired Malcolm, seating himself in the arm-chair.

The governor, in some surprise, did as he was requested, and then drew a chair and seated himself near Malcolm, saying:

"How can I serve you, Mr. Montrose?"

"First, by giving me your word of honor that what passes at this interview between you and myself shall be considered strictly private and confidential. I make the request, not for my own sake, but for that of another person—a young lady."

"Miss Leaton?" inquired the governor, dubiously.

"Another young lady, a stranger to you, and until this morning, to me also," replied Malcolm, evasively.

"She is not in any way concerned in that Allworth poisoning affair, I hope, because, if she were, I would not give you the promise, you know?"

"Nor should I be likely to ask it. No, she was never in the county until about two weeks ago, and has never, in the least degree, transgressed the laws of the land."

The governor paused in deep thought for a moment, and then cautiously answered:

"Well, Mr. Montrose, I have sufficient confidence in your integrity of mind to believe that you would not confide to me, or bind me to keep secret any conversation that it would be my duty to communicate, and so you have my promise that whatever may pass between us in this interview shall be held strictly confidential."

"And that upon your word and honor?" inquired Malcolm, solemnly.

"Upon my word and honor, yes," replied the governor, earnestly.

"Anderson, I have heard that the father of Eudora Leaton was your patron and best friend?" said Montrose.

"I owe him everything I possess in this world," replied the governer, shortly.

"And, therefore, you must feel for his most unhappy child?"

"As if she were my own—yes, I do."

"And you believe the daughter of so good a man free from the foul crime for which she is doomed to die?"

"I do not know; I am inclined to believe her so."

"Then while you are disposed to believe her innocent, how can you consider the approaching execution in any other character than that of a judicial murder?"

The governor arose hastily from his seat, and walked up and down the floor of his office in great agitation.

Mr. Montrose, steadied by the concentrated intensity of his own purpose, sat watching the troubled governor.

At length the latter resumed his seat, and wiped his brow, saying:

"Why do you say all this to me, Mr. Montrose? I did not try her, nor condemn her, and shall not execute the sentence of the law upon her. Granted that her execution may be a judicial murder, I shall not have committed it, and I cannot help it."

"*You can help it!*" said Malcom, emphatically.

"Ha!" cried the governor, looking up in perplexity.

"I say you *can help it!* You can hinder this great wrong being done—this great crime being committed—this innocent girl being executed! And if you do not hinder it, you yourself become accessory to the murder of your benefactor's orphan daughter!" exclaimed Montrose, with impassioned earnestness.

The governor gazed upon the speaker in astonishment and perplexity that only required the additional element of fear to form perfect consternation.

"I—I hinder all this? For the Redeemer's sake, Mr. Montrose, tell me how. I am a poor man, with a wife and child, but I would joyfully sacrifice everything I possess in this world, and go forth a beggar, if, by so doing, I could save her from the horrible fate awaiting her!" he eagerly protested.

"Noble heart! no sacrifice will be required of you. Eudora Leaton's friends would never permit you to suffer loss or injury in her cause. No, Anderson! you will at the same time save your patron's child and enrich yourself!" exclaimed Malcolm, seizing and pressing the brown hand of the governor.

Anderson grew, if possible, more embarrassed than before. He dropped his head upon his breast, bent his eyes upon the floor, and remained silent. Perceiving that he would not make any comment at present, Malcolm continued, by inquiring:

"How much is your post here worth?"

"A small salary with apartments," replied the governor, glad of a question to which he could return a straightforward answer.

"How much can you save from that?"

"Twenty pounds a year when all goes prosperously."

"Then, under the most favorable circumstances, it would take you five years to save one hundred, ten

to lay by two hundred, and twenty-five to accumulate five hundred pounds?"

"Just, so, if everything went well with me; otherwise, I could save nothing, and might even get into debt."

"Yes. Well, Anderson, if you will lend your assistance in the most righteous cause of delivering your benefactor's orphan daughter from unmerited death, I will pay you down five thousand pounds in hard English sovereigns—a sum that will make you and your family independent in this or any other country for the rest of your lives!" said Malcolm, coming at once to the point, though with an unsteady voice and flushed cheek.

"Good Heaven, sir!" exclaimed the governor, shrinking back, as the blood rushed to his face.

"You consent?" asked Malcom, in a low husky voice.

"I never dreamed of such a thing!"

"The sum is large, it is all I can raise, or it should be doubled, trebled, quadrupled! I would give twenty thousand—a hundred thousand—a million if I had it—as I would give my life, if I could do it, to save Eudora."

"And I would not ask one penny to save her, if I could do it honestly, sir. Perhaps I didn't understand you, sir. How could I save her?"

Malcolm seized his wrist, bent to his ear, and in eager, vehement whispers, recounted his simple plan for the escape of Eudora.

While he spoke the governor listened with downcast eyes, and at the end of his speech answered nothing.

"What have you to say to this? Will you take the money, and save her?" demanded Malcolm, impatiently.

"Mr. Montrose, I repeat, without taking one penny of that money, I would gladly save her if I could do so honestly; but to lend my countenance to the plan you propose, or any plan for a prisoner's escape, would be a grave breach of trust."

"A justifiable one, if ever such existed," exclaimed Malcolm, earnestly.

"Yes, if ever such existed; but no breach of trust ever could be justifiable, Mr. Montrose."

"Not even to save an innocent girl from a horrible death?"

"No, sir, not even for that. But, indeed, I do not know that she is innocent, poor girl, and even if I did, it would not be my place to set judge, jury, and sheriff right by opening the doors and letting a convicted prisoner walk freely out of gaol!" said the governor, trying to speak sternly, though his honest face paled, flushed, and quivered with emotion, and he was again obliged to rise and walk rapidly up and down the floor.

Malcolm watched him closely, and perceived, notwithstanding the decisiveness of his words, that he was undergoing a severe conflict between duty and inclination, and that his temptation came not from greed of gain, but from pity for Eudora.

Malcolm let him walk up and down for some time in silence, and then, as he saw the struggle still going on in his mind, arose and joined him.

And as they paced side by side, Malcolm said:

"You will have compassion on this poor, sweet victim; you will permit her to escape and reach some foreign country in safety, and in after years, when her innocence shall be discovered, you will rejoice to remember that you saved her blameless life from a felon's death!"

Anderson mournfully shook his head, saying, "My God! I am not fit for my hard duties."

"No, you are not hard enough for the stern duties of a governor of a gaol. Your humane nature must suffer much in constantly witnessing the very worst forms of human woe, crime, remorse and punishment, and the wide ruin and unspeakable misery they bring upon the innocent as well as the guilty," said Malcolm, gently.

"True, true! my heart has been wrung daily, for years, in witnessing the wretchedness of prisoners and their friends. But what would you have—some must be gaolers?"

"But not men like you—you suffer too much in the performance of your duties. Come, listen to me! be persuaded to leave this abode of sin and misery. Let Eudora escape! take the compensation that her grateful friends will offer you, and go to some lovely, quiet, rural home, in some foreign country, where you can live with your wife and child amid the sweet influence of nature, and with the almost Divine consciousness of having saved a human life! Come—speak—consent! urged Malcolm pursuasively.

"I dare not! oh, Heaven! I dare not commit a breach of trust—I dare not do a dishonorable deed!" said Anderson, wiping the streaming perspiration from his brow.

"Remember her dead father, and all his brotherly kindness to you, and pity his orphan child in her unspeakable wretchedness. Think how dear life is at her tender age; how hard it is to die at seventeen, and such an awful death—a death of public ignominy! How her young heart must shrink in anguish and affright. Think how sweet the offer of life would be to her; how her spirit would leap with joy to meet it; how she would bless you; how she would thank you; how she would pray for you through all the days of the life that she would owe to you;—and how you would rejoice to feel that the debt of gratitude to your benefactor had been abundantly paid off by saving the life of his child, who, but for you, would be mouldering in a premature, dishonored grave! Anderson, think how, at this very moment, the spirit of her sainted father bends down from the Heaven of Heavens to hear what you shall say!" concluded Malcolm, solemnly.

"Oh, Montrose, speak no more! All this that you have said my own heart has urged more forcibly than you could

speak! But I must not do this thing. I must not stain my soul with dishonor!" exclaimed the gaoler, and then, man though he was, he burst into tears, went and leaned his elbows on his desk, dropped his face upon his open palms, and wept bitterly.

But not for this would Malcolm Montrose abandon the cause of Eudora.

He went to the side of Anderson, put his arm caressingly over his shoulder, and continued his pleadings with all the impassioned eloquence of love and grief. Whether he was successful will be seen.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE MYSTERIOUS PLAN OF ESCAPE.

Condemned to death—how near
The fatal, terrible to-morrow!
'Twould end her agony and sorrow,
Yet, oh, how fraught with fear!
She counted—mind's fore-torturing hell—
Hours, minutes, till the solemn bell
Should sound upon her ear.—*Michell.*

MEANWHILE Annella had entered the cell of the young prisoner, whom she found extended upon the outside of the bed, looking more like a corpse laid out than a living creature. Mrs. Barton was sitting near her.

Annella nodded to the warder, and then, with that hushed air of awe with which one approaches death or deep affliction, she drew near Eudora, whispering:

"How do you find yourself this morning?"

Eudora, whose eyes were covered with her left hand, put out her right hand, and silently pressed that of Annella, but made no other answer.

Annella stooped and kissed her chilled lips, and after a few minutes, repeated her question:

"How do you find yourself this morning, dear Eudora?"

"Drifting, drifting down the dark river towards the horrible fall! I shall soon go over and be dashed to pieces! That will be well. There will be a catching of the breath, a shiver of fear, a shock of death, and all will be over!" murmured the sufferer.

Again Annella stooped and pressed her lips to those of Eudora, and then turning to the warder, she asked:

"How has she seemed since I was here yesterday?"

"Oh, Miss, it a'most breaks my heart to be with her and see her—it do. She bore up well enough even after Mr. Montrose told her as the petition had been refused, and she knew there was no hope at all. She heard all that as quiet as possible, and took leave of him quite calm when he went away. You see, I think she tried hard to bear up for his sake, to spare his feelings; for the moment he was gone, she turned and sank down in a deep swoon, poor dear! and that's the second time she's gone into one o' them since she has been here. And it was a longer fit than the first, and we only brought her to this morning about sunrise, and she's been lying as you see her, ever since. And what makes matters worse, the chaplain, as might ha' spoke some words o' comfort to her, is ill in bed," replied Mrs. Barton.

Annella would have given much for the privilege of whispering into the ear of the despairing sufferer a few words of hope, but even her sanguine nature felt that the communication would now be premature, as it might also be cruel and dangerous. And as she might not speak of hope, Annella felt that all other words were worse than mockery in a woe like this.

She sat down beside the bed and took the prisoner's poor little wasted hand, and held it in silence, sometimes press-

ing it tenderly, or kissing it, while she waited in breathless suspense for the appearance of Malcolm Montrose.

More than two hours passed in this silent, dreary misery, and still Malcolm did not appear. And now every passing minute seemed to tread with a leaden foot upon the sinking heart of Annella, that every moment grew heavier, more fearful, and more impatient.

"Oh, I cannot stand this! I shall lose my breath presently!" she inwardly exclaimed, feeling the protracted suspense grow almost suffocating.

At length footsteps were heard approaching, the cell door was unlocked, and Malcolm Montrose was ushered in by the turnkey, who, as usual, retired.

Annella bounded forward to meet him, and raised her eyes, dilated and blazing with burning anxiety, to his face.

She read there the death warrant of Eudora Leaton.

"He has failed!" she said to herself, as she sank, shuddering into the nearest seat, where she sat during the remainder of the interview, like one spell-bound in some awful trance, with her elbow resting on the little table, her chin leaning on the palm of her hand, her face white as death, her lips compressed, her eyes contracted, glittering, and fixed apparently upon some far-distant, visionary, fearful scene in which, perhaps, she saw herself the principal actor.

Malcolm, meanwhile, passed her quickly, and sank upon his knees beside the bed, and took Eudora's pale hand, inquiring, in a low tone of reverential tenderness:

"How is my dearest Eudora, now?"

"Almost resigned, Malcolm, if I could only suffer alone! —thinking less of my own fate than of your sorrow when all shall be over with me," replied Eudora, opening her eyes, and fixing them upon his face with an expression of tender pity.

He could not bear the look of those sweet eyes. He bowed his head upon her hands, and it required all his

strength to keep the swelling agony of his bosom from bursting forth in sobs.

"Oh, Heaven!" he exclaimed, "what anguish it is to feel myself utterly powerless to save you, or to help you, even by the sacrifice of my life and soul, that I would gladly offer for your sake!"

She drew her hand from under his face, and passing it around his bowed head, gently smoothed his hair, while she said:

"All that human power could do to save me you have done. Let that thought support you."

"But to think that I can do no more!"

"Yes, dearest, truest friend, you can do much yet to console me."

"Ah, Eudora, how—how can I comfort or help you?"

"Why, for the few remaining days of my life, come to me as often, and stay as long as they will let you."

"That be sure I will; but, oh! how little good it can do you!"

"It will do me all the good I am capable of appreciating now. Oh, Malcolm! you do not know how much I regret those precious days vainly lost in London when they might have been spent with me."

"And so do I, dearest; but yet I should have been even more wretched than I am now, had not those days been employed as they were, in using every possible means to gain a respite for you."

"I know; so, therefore, it is of no use to regret them."

"And now, dearest, what else is there that I can do for you?"

"Promise me, dear Malcolm, that when the last day of my life comes, you will be with me in my hour of death. It will not seem so horrible if I can have you near me, and take my farewell look from your kind eyes."

"I promise, Eudora," answered Malcolm, feeling sure that it would drive him mad to witness her execution, yet

resolving to stand by her to the very last moment of her life, if permitted to do so.

He remained with her as long as possible, and then in rising to take leave, promised to be with her again early the next day.

"Malcolm," she said, holding his hand as he lingered by her side, "you will think it a frivolous request from one in my awful circumstances, I know, but I must make it for all that—"

"What is it, dear? Be sure that no wish of yours could be thought frivolous by any one," said Malcolm, earnestly.

"It is only to go to Allworth Abbey this afternoon, and bring away my poor little Fidelle, and bring her with you when you come to-morrow."

"Certainly, dearest Eudora; I will attend to it at once."

"I would like to see the faithful little creature once more before I die. Indeed, I wanted to have her here, only I did not like to bring any harmless creature to such a gloomy place as this; and, besides, I do not think they would have let me have her.

"They will let you have almost anything you desire now, dearest."

"Except life and liberty, or anything that might help me to either—yes, I know that! You will not think it levity in me, even in my awful position, to ask to have my little dog, will you?"

"No, my own dearest one, no; I only see in your desire the all-embracing goodness of your heart, that, like the love of Divine Providence, encircles all creatures, from the highest to the humblest," replied Malcolm, bowing his head over her hand, and pressing it to his lips, as he turned to leave the cell.

He looked back for Annella, who remained spell-bound as before.

"Come, Miss, time is up, and you must leave with Mr.

Montrose," said the warder, touching the girl's shoulder to call her attention.

Annella started from her trance, and arose to obey; but before leaving the cell she turned to Eudora, and, in an eager, earnest, breathless whisper, exclaimed:

"Do not resign yourself to death! Keep up your heart—look forward to life and liberty! for I swear before Heaven, and by all my hopes of salvation, that you shall be saved!"

To Eudora these words seemed nothing more nor less than those of madness—the expression of a compassionate soul wrought by sympathy to frenzy. But before she had considered how to reply to them, the speaker had vanished.

Annella joined Malcolm in the lobby; but it was not until they were fairly outside the prison walls that she spoke, but without the tone of reproach Malcolm expected to hear in her voice. She merely said:

"So you have failed again?"

"Oh, Heaven! yes. I did all that any man possibly could do to win him over! I appealed to his affection for her father, to his compassion for herself, to his regard for his own interests, to every motive that could actuate the soul of man—but in vain! He was not to be tempted by money, or moved by mercy. He made it a matter of conscience not to 'betray his trust,' as he called it. And when an honest man—a man like Anderson—takes a stand upon conscience, you might just as well try to uproot Helvellyn as to move him from his position!"

"Pitiless monster!" exclaimed Annella.

"No, he was not that either; he wept like a woman in refusing me; but his last words to me were, 'Mr. Montrose, I dare not stain my soul with dishonor; and you, as a man of honor, should not dare to urge me to do so.' What could I reply to that? Nothing. And I came away with a broken heart. Miss Wilder, have you no reproaches for me?"

"No. It is said that things beyond remedy should be beyond regret, and when they are not so, they should be remedied instead of regretted," said Annella, in so strange a tune that her companion turned to look upon her, and started to see her lips drawn tightly away from her clenched teeth, and a deadly, stiletto-gleam darting from the contracted pupils of her half closed eyes.

"What do you mean, Annella?" he inquired in vague alarm.

"Nothing that I intend to confide to you or to any one else whose friendship is so cold a thing that they will not peril *soul* as well as body for a friend in extremity!" said Annella, severely.

"That is a very bitter reproach, which I do not deserve, Miss Wilder," said Malcolm, sorrowfully.

"Is it? Good people like you and Mr. Anderson, who would not strain a point of conscience to save a friend, may think it bitter; I think it just; but then I'm not good, you know. I'm only devoted—mind, body, and estate, for life, death, and eternity—to my friends, or rather for my friend, for I feel only for one."

"I believe you, Miss Wilder; you have not even the slightest pity for the anguish I suffer on Eudora's account," said Malcolm, bitterly.

"No, not one bit! for you have the use of your long limbs to go whither you please over this sunny earth. I pity only, that poor, sweet girl, who cannot get out; who is waiting only for death to release her from prison. But she shall not die! by all my hopes of heaven, she shall not!" hissed Annella through her clenched teeth, while the same fearful expression sat upon her tightly-drawn lips, and gleamed from her contracted eyes.

"She would not die, if you, kind girl, by any effort or any sacrifice, could save her; or if I could do so; but oh, Annella, everything has been tried in vain! human power can do no more!" groaned Malcolm.

"Can it not? We shall see! What is the meaning of that noble proverb, 'Where there is a will there is a way?' It came from the wisdom of ages, and I believe it. My own will is so strong that I shall find a way to save her, though it should lead through floods and flames!"

"Dear, dear girl, one must honor your single-hearted devotion to this object, while at the same time—"

"You believe me mad," interrupted Annella. Well, believe me so; it will do no harm. Mr. Montrose, I am at this day a poor, weak, wild girl, as I may be in another a corpse, a prisoner, or an exile! but whatever becomes of me, Eudora shall be free!"

"Annella, there is something in your words and manner that fills me with alarm for your sake. I fear you will attempt some desperate act, which instead of serving Eudora, will only ruin yourself. What is the plan you are thinking of?" inquired the young man, in earnest kindness.

"I will not tell you, Mr. Montrose; henceforth I shall act alone in this matter; then, if my deed be a misdemeanor, my person only will suffer for it; and if it be a mortal sin, my soul only will perish for it," replied Annella, with gloomy firmness.

"Well, Miss Wilder," said Montrose, solemnly, "whatever your own thoughts may be, this one request I must earnestly make of you—that you say not another word upon the subject of rescue to Miss Leaton. It would be now the greatest possible cruelty to disturb her thoughts with vain hopes of escape, and prevent her from settling her mind into that religious resignation and composure that her awful condition renders so desirable. Therefore I must entreat your silence to her, at least upon this anxious subject."

"You have my promise. I will not say another word to her upon the subject of her escape," answered Annella, with great emphasis.

They walked on in silence awhile, until they reached a

point where their road forked—the right hand path leading across to the Anchorage, and the left-hand one going into the town. Annella stopped short, saying:

"Our ways divide here, and I must hurry home, lest my longer absence should raise inquiry; but before I go, Mr. Montrose, I have something to say to you, and if you do really love Eudora Leaton, and long for her release, you will attend to what I say."

"Dear Annella, I am all attention," answered Malcolm, in anxious perplexity.

She looked up and down the roads, and all around them, to see if any person were in hearing, and finding all the way clear, she suddenly clutched the hand of Malcolm, held it with a spasmodic grip, gazed in his face with eager intensity, drew closer to him, and whispered, with breathless vehemence:

"Do just as you would have done if our plan had succeeded."

"Eh?"

"Make all the arrangements for flight just as you would have made them if the governor could have been bribed to connive at Eudora's escape."

"I do not comprehend you. What do you mean?"

"Dullard! I mean this—go secretly and find out some small vessel; hire it, and keep it hovering near this part of the coast ready for service at a moment's warning; have a little row-boat always at the beach ready to take you to the vessel at an instant's notice; keep your fast horse tied in the shade of the thicket, under the dead wall, at the back of the gaol: and you yourself walk every night up and down before the front gate of the prison, just as you walked the first night after Eudora's conviction, and so wait for what fortune shall send you; and then, when you find Eudora standing before you, do not stop to ask how she came there, but catch her up in your arms, run with her to the thicket, place her before you on the horse, gal-

lop to the beach, put her in the boat, row for life to the vessel, and set sail for some foreign port!" said Annella, speaking with breathless excitement.

"Dear, devoted girl, are you really mad?" exclaimed Malcolm, in dismay.

"No," cried Annella, with startling energy, "only exalted above doubt, fear, and selfishness. Promise that you will do as I request."

"Well, to make these arrangements will do no harm, though they may do no good. Yes, Annella, I promise," answered Malcolm, earnestly.

"And you will set about the business immediately?"

"I will."

"Then Eudora shall be saved!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A YOUNG HEROINE.

A lamp faint lit the cell,
Feebly upon her iron bed,
Feebly upon her drooping head,
Its sickly quiverings fell:
The silent watchers sat apart,
What passed in that poor bleeding heart
Their cold hearts naught could tell.—*Michell.*

THE first thing Malcolm Montrose did the next morning was to go over to Allworth Abbey to fetch the small sky-terrier that had been Eudora's only pet.

He found the poor little creature rambling disconsolately about the grounds, where the servants told him she always wandered, as if in search of her lost mistress.

He took her with him in the chaise and drove to the prison.

He was admitted at once to the condemned cell, where he found Eudora reclining upon the bed, from which she seldom now arose, for her strength seemed hourly waning, and it was a question whether she could survive till the day appointed for the execution, to undergo the sentence of the law. She was attended by the stern-faced woman who alternately, with Mrs. Barton, kept guard over the prisoner.

She arose upon her elbow to welcome Malcolm, but before she could speak, Fidelle, with a quick bark of joy, had recognized her mistress, and sprang from the arms of Malcolm to the bosom of Eudora, where she nestled, trembling with delight.

The poor young prisoner smiled faintly as she put one hand caressingly around her favorite, and held out the other to her visitor, saying:

"I thank you very much, dear Malcolm, for fetching her so soon. Poor little thing, I'm glad *she* does not know," she added, tenderly caressing her pet.

Ah, but Fidelle *did* know—if not the nature and particulars of the heavy misfortune—at least that something had gone wofully wrong with her mistress, upon whose faded, wasted, hollow-eyed countenance she gazed with the touching mute eloquence of a dog's love and sympathy.

Malcolm seated himself beside Eudora, and watched her uneasily as she lay dimly smiling and softly caressing her little dumb friend, and apparently forgetting for the time being her own awful position. And as he noticed her, his heart ached with the foreboding fear that her mind as well as her body was giving way and sinking into imbecility under the pressure of her heavy calamity.

He wished to test the truth of his suspicion by conversing with her upon some subject more serious than that of her little dog, who seemed for the present to engage all her attention; yet he hesitated to disturb the transient peace that seemed to have descended upon her bruised spirit like a blessing.

"I wonder if they would let me keep her? she could do no harm, you know, poor little beast, and it would be almost a comfort to have something here that loves me through the sleepless nights," said Eudora, raising her eyes with pleading inquiry to Malcolm's face.

"I think they will, if you so much desire it. I think they will give you every indulgence the rules do not absolutely forbid," answered Malcolm.

"It is only a few days, so they might not mind, you know. Why, even the cruel men of the French Revolution let Marie Antoinette keep her little dog, though they took crown and kingdom, husband and children, and even life away from her, and surely—"

"I will see to it, love; there can be no possible objection to granting you so harmless an indulgence," interrupted Montrose.

Malcolm's order for admission comprised only one hour of each day. It was supposed that longer or more frequent visits would only distract the prisoner's mind from the solemn duty of preparation for death, for which so short a time had been granted her.

Punctually, therefore, at the end of the stipulated hour, the turnkey unlocked the door of the cell, and informed Mr. Montrose that his time was up.

Eudora held her little dog towards him, saying:

"You had better take her down and get permission before you venture to leave her with me, Malcolm."

Montrose silently received the little animal, but when Fidelle perceived that she was to be carried off, she set up such a piteous howling and struggling, that even the stern heart of the female warder, callous to human suffering, was touched with compassion, and she said.

"I think as how you may venture to leave her, sir. You can ask the governor about it when you go down stairs, and then, if so be objections are made, it will be time enough to come and force her away."

"Thank you; I think you are quite right," said Malcolm, restoring the little creature to her mistress. Then stooping, he pressed his lips to the forehead of Eudora, promised to repeat his visit the next day at the usual hour, took his leave, and left the cell.

In the hall below he met the governor and preferred his request. And Mr. Anderson, really pleased with the opportunity of granting any indulgence to the unhappy young prisoner not inconsistent with the duties of his office, readily consented, and he himself went to the cell to assure Eudora that she might keep her little four-footed friend as long as she liked.

Malcolm Montrose left the prison wondering that he had not encountered Annella Wilder there, or on the road. He felt extremely anxious again to see and speak with that mad girl, who, he much feared, was rushing headlong into some frantic enterprise which, without helping Eudora, might ruin herself. He vainly looked out for her on his way back to town, and vainly expected her during the remainder of the morning.

The whole day passed without his seeing or hearing anything of the admiral's grand-daughter.

The next morning, however, as he was sitting over an untasted breakfast, impatiently waiting for the hour that he might visit Eudora, the door was suddenly pushed open, and unannounced, Annella stood before him.

He positively started with dismay at her appearance.

She was dressed in black as on the previous days, and her face had always been pale and wasted from the effects of the long-continued slow starvation of her childhood's years. But now two crimson spots burned in the hollows of her cheeks, and her eyes glowed like fire in their sunken sockets. She seemed consuming with some hidden fever or restrained frenzy.

Malcolm took her hand, and made her sit down in the easy chair, while he said:

"I did not see you at the prison yesterday. I hope that illness did not keep you away?"

"It could not have done so. No; they would not admit me yesterday, and they will not to-day. They say that so many visits disturb the prisoner's mind, and draw off her thoughts from the duty of preparing for death. They say that from this time no one is to see her, except the officers of justice, the ministers of the Gospel, and yourself, as her nearest living relative!" answered Annella.

"They say—who say, my dear child?"

"Why, the sheriff and the gaoler, and even the chaplain, who stood my friend at first, but who now says that my daily visits will do the prisoner more harm than good."

"This will interfere with your hopes of saving Eudora," said Malcolm, only with the view of drawing her out; "for, of course, if you are not permitted to see her, you can do nothing for her?"

"Yes I can! besides, I shall see her once more. The sheriff promised that, to get rid of me, I am to be allowed one parting interview with her the day before she is to die—'*To die!*' as if he thought I was going to let her die!" exclaimed Annella, feverishly, while the crimson spots in her hollow cheeks burned more brightly, and the smoldering fire in her sunken eyes flashed more fiercely.

"What are your plans, Annella?" inquired Malcolm, with as much calmness as he could assume, secretly hoping that she might have forgotten her former refusal to confide in him, and would now, as a matter of course, inform him.

But Annella had a good memory and a firm will. She replied:

"I repeat that I will not tell you! I will not tell any one! I will act alone! If my act be a felony, my person only shall pay for it! If it be a sin, my soul only shall answer for it! If the plan fail—as it shall not—I only will bear the blame! If it succeed—as it shall—you only shall gain the honor!"

"The honor, from whom?"

"From Eudora, of course, for saving her life! from no one else, for none but her, you, and myself, shall ever know that she is saved! All else shall believe that she has perished!"

"My dear, dear child, you talk wildly!" said Malcolm, uneasily.

"I do not, even when I reiterate that Eudora shall be saved, while all the world, except us three, shall believe that she has perished!"

"Annella, you speak of impossibilities!"

"You will find before three days shall have passed over our heads, that I have converted those impossibilities into certainties."

Malcolm Montrose bowed his head upon his breast, and remained a few moments in deep and anxious thought. Then looking up he said:

"I have been vainly taxing my brain to discover what your scheme may be; but I cannot find it out; I cannot even imagine what it is."

"No, I presume not," replied Annella.

"You are not perhaps dreaming of such an impracticability as taking her place and dying in her stead?" inquired Malcolm, dubiously.

Annella laughed a low, weird, unnatural laugh, as she replied:

"No, for that, indeed, would be impossible; though, could it be otherwise, I would gladly attempt it, since it is so much easier to die one's self than to see a dear friend die! But such is not my plan, for it would be, as you say, impracticable. I should be found out in an hour. Besides, even to attempt such a plan would require the connivance of her warders, which you know cannot be gained for love or money. No, Mr. Montrose, what I do shall be accomplished without the assistance, connivance, or even knowledge of any soul within or without the prison!

It shall be accomplished by myself singly!" said Annella, proudly.

Again Malcolm dropped his head upon his breast, and fell into profound and troubled thought. At length he raised his head, and said, very gravely:

"I have discovered your scheme, Annella; and I am glad that I have done so in time to save you from attempting to put it into practice."

Annella started violently, and gazed upon him anxiously.

"For the very attempt would be a crime."

"Well, it would be *my* crime, not yours. *I* should have to answer for it, not you! And if *I* choose to peril my life, liberty, and honor here, and my salvation hereafter, in the service of Eudora, it is not *your* hand or voice that should be lifted to hinder me!" exclaimed Annella, indignantly, rising and pacing the floor. Presently she paused before him, and sharply demanded:

"Why do you, of all men in the world, seek to hinder me from attempting to save Eudora?"

"Because, dear girl, in the first place, the very attempt to save her by such means would be, as I said before, a crime; and because in the second place it would never succeed!"

"Why should it not succeed?" demanded Annella, abruptly.

"Because, dearest girl, the physician of the prison is a man of science, skill, and experience, and he would detect the trick in a moment."

"The physician of the prison?" inquired Annella, with a puzzled look.

"Yes; Dr. Nelson would understand and expose the *ruse* in an instant."

"But why should he more than others? May I die, if I know what you are driving at!" exclaimed Annella, looking more and more perplexed.

"Why, at this fact, that Dr. Nelson would certainly be

summoned; that his knowledge of narcotics and their effects would enable him to comprehend the case at the first glance, and so your scheme would fail."

While he spoke Annella was watching him attentively. When he ceased, she said:

"I am astonished at your perspicacity, Mr. Montrose; but tell me what you suppose the plan to be which the medical attendant of the prison will be so quick to detect?"

"Why, of course, when you assure me that Eudora Leaton shall be saved, at the very time that all the world, except our three selves, shall believe her to have perished, I can come but to one of two conclusions in respect to your purposed course."

"And what may those be?"

"The *first* I have already mentioned; that perhaps you insanely propose to take her place, in the mad hope that your person might possibly be mistaken for hers and yourself permitted to suffer in her stead, so as to deceive the world into the belief that she had perished, while in reality she would be safe and free."

"You know that I have denied and repudiated that course as impracticable and even unthought of by me. But the *other!* What is the other conclusion to which your wisdom has arrived in regard to my purposed course?"

"Or else—" said Malcolm, hesitatingly.

"Or else?—Yes! What else? What is that *second* conclusion—that other scheme which is to be a crime, and which the physician of the gaol is to detect and expose? I am anxious to know what you suppose that to be, if you will tell me?" said Annella, mockingly.

Malcolm hesitated for a moment, and then said:

"You intend surreptitiously, to administer some powerful narcotic sedative to Eudora, which shall plunge her into a sleep, trance, or coma, so profound as to simulate death. And then, when she shall be supposed dead, you

propose to have her body claimed by me, as her nearest relative, ostensibly for the purpose of Christian burial, but really for that of being conveyed to some safe and secret place and restored to consciousness. A very ingenious plan, Annella, which, if it could be made to succeed, would certainly deliver our dearest one from captivity and death, while it would, at the same time, mislead the public into the belief that she had perished in prison. But, dear Annella, for the reasons I advanced just now, it must not be attempted. The very administration of such a drug would seriously endanger Eudora's life, and therefore constitute a crime. Besides, it could not succeed for a moment. The physican who would be called would immediately recognize the presence of the drug and apply antidotes. So the only effect of your scheme, my poor Annella, would be to entail useless suffering upon that sweet victim; therefore—"

He was interrupted and astonished by a peal of weird laughter from Annella, who, as soon as she recovered herself, exclaimed:

"I do so much admire your perspicacity, Mr. Montrose, and also your ingenuity in imagining such a plan! And I likewise perfectly agree with you that it could never succeed, as the science and experience of the prison doctor would detect and expose the fraud in an instant. But I never even dreamed of such a *ruse*, Mr. Montrose. I know nothing whatever of 'narcotic sedatives' or any other drugs, or their effects; and even if I did, I would not for the world risk Eudora's life by administering them to her. And even if I were wicked enough to do so, I should never have the opportunity afforded me, because of the sharp eyes of those female turnkeys that are never removed from me while I am in the cell. No, Mr. Montrose, you are very clever indeed, but you have not discovered my plan. My scheme involves no such risk of life to Eudora, nor of discovery by the physician! No; for if my scheme succeeds, as it must, Eudora shall leave the prison in full possession

of her life, health, and faculties! Excuse my having laughed, but I could not help it. I was so tickled by your positiveness, so delighted to find, after all, that you had not detected my plot! And if *you*, with *your* perspicacity, have not discovered it, who will?—why, no one!" exclaimed Annella, triumphantly.

"Then, in the name of Heaven, since neither of my conjectures were right, what is your most inexplicable scheme?" demanded Malcolm, in amazement.

"I have already several times assured you that I shall not tell you; and I mean to keep my word!" replied Annella, firmly.

"Let me consider for a moment," said Malcolm reflectively. "You propose, without the assistance, connivance, or even knowledge of any other single soul within or without the prison, except our three selves, to place Eudora Leaton, free and safe, outside the prison walls, while all the world except ourselves shall believe her to have perished?"

"Yes, that is just exactly what I undertake to do!" said Annella, exultingly.

"But why not confide to me the mode by which you propose to do all this?" inquired Malcolm, gravely.

"Because I won't!" said Annella, giving him the "woman's reason" without an instant's hesitation.

"Miss Wilder," began Malcolm, in a grave, sorrowful tone, "I greatly fear that in your beautiful devotion to Eudora, your zeal in her behalf, and your total inexperience of the world, you are about to rush into some ruinous enterprise that may destroy yourself without saving that poor, sweet girl."

"Well?" inquired Annella, looking up anxiously and defiantly.

"Under these circumstances, I doubt whether it is not my duty to go to the Anchorage, and advise your friends there to take better care of you than they seem to be doing," answered Montrose, gravely.

Annella jumped to her feet with a rebound that wrung like steel springs on the floor, confronted him, and flashed-sheet-lightning from her eyes, as she exclaimed:

"If you dare! If you *dare*, Mr. Montrose! I will do you some deadly mischief! I will, as the Lord in Heaven hears me; for I am not good, I tell you! I am bad! I have black blood in my veins, wherever I could have got it!"

While Malcolm gazed in astonishment upon her, her mood suddenly changed. The fire died out of her eyes, her arms dropped by her sides, and her voice lowered, as she said:

"But—pshaw! I am a fool to threaten you; you would not mind what mischief anyone might do you. But I will give you a reason for your silence that you must mind—Eudora's safety! Mr. Montrose, I was wrong to boast so much to you of my own secret certainty of success, especially as I refused to confide to you the grounds of that certainty

"Will you confide them to me now, Annella?" inquired Montrose, kindly.

"No! and a thousand times no! but still—"

"Still you expect me to believe in them?"

"Yes; and when you are inclined to doubt, because of the humble instrument of this success, please to remember that a mouse once freed a lion from a net, and a goose saved imperial Rome! and think that poor Annella Wilder may not have boasted vainly when she promised to deliver Eudora Leaton from death! And so, if you really do love Eudora, and desire her deliverance, you will take no step to hinder my plans! Nay, you must promise me to take none!"

"You ask much of me, Annella!"

"Not more than you will grant for Eudora's sake."

"But your plans are totally inexplicable; and your object, by your own single act to set the prisoner free and safe

outside the prison walls, and make all the world believe that she has perished, seems quite impossible of attainment."

"I shall accomplish it."

"It is a riddle to me."

"Let it remain so for a few days longer. But I did not come here to propound or expound riddles; I came to tell you that as they have refused me admittance to Eudora until the evening before the appointed execution, it will be well to make some little change in our arrangements."

"How?"

"Why, as I cannot get into the prison before Tuesday evening, of course I cannot get Eudora out before that time."

"And what then?"

"Why, then it will be perfectly useless for you to keep the fast horse tied every night in the thicket, or lose your own rest by watching near the prison. And it would not only be useless, but indiscreet, as it might attract attention, and endanger the success of my plot."

"Then what is it you wish of me?" inquired Malcolm, rather with the design of acquiring some little knowledge of her plan than with any hope of its success.

"Before I tell you what I wish, I want to know if you have already done what you engaged to do?"

"You mean to ask—"

"If you have hired the vessel to take her away, when she is safe outside the prison walls?"

"I have not yet."

"You promised to do that! You dare not break your pledged word!" exclaimed Annella, between alarm and defiance.

"I have no purpose to break faith with you, dear Annella. It can do no manner of harm to hire the vessel you speak of; and it is my intention to look out for one to-day What next?"

"Why, after you have hired the vessel to hover near the

coast, and arranged to have the little boat always tied and floating at the beach, then I advise you to keep as quiet and get as much rest as you can between now and Tuesday night; for I assure you you will need all your health, and strength, and nerve, and presence of mind for that occasion. Then, on Tuesday night, about eleven o'clock, have your fast horse ready in the thicket, and you yourself wait near the gate, and, as I said before, when you find Eudora Leaton in your arms, never stop to ask a question, or to look behind you, but fly as Lot fled from burning Sodom!"

"Mystery of mysteries—all is mystery!" exclaimed Montrose, involuntarily paraphrasing the Scripture proverb, as he gazed like one in a dream upon the thin, flashing face of the excited girl.

"And now promise me that you will not go to the Anchorage to do what you threatened, or even attempt to hinder me in any way."

"I promise," answered Malcolm, "though I do so in blind confidence."

"Your faith shall be justified, if ever faith was."

"I promise," repeated Malcolm, like one under the influence of a spell.

"That will do; I know that you will keep your word; and now that I have your pledge, I will tell you—"

"Your plan?"

"No! But why it is I cannot confide that plan to you, Mr. Montrose;—because if I were to impart to you or to any other human being the nature of my plan, it could never be accomplished, and Eudora would be left to die."

"But look at the clock! the hour of your daily visit to the prison is approaching, and I will not detain you any longer. Give my love to Eudora, and explain to her why I cannot come to her. Good-bye. Remember!"

And so saying, Annella seized and dropped his hand, and vanished from the room, leaving Montrose still under her spell.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE READING OF THE DEATH-WARRANT.

Life! life! Oh, Heaven, for this!
To gaze again on God's bright sun,
To see the moss-marged streamlet run,
To feel the wind's soft kiss;
To meet loved eyes where pity glows,
To hear kind words to soothe her woes,
Life! life! Oh, bliss of bliss!—*Michell.*

He remained for a few moments, sitting in silence where she had left him, and then rose with an effort to shake off her influence, murmuring to himself:

"What an incomprehensible creature! a mere girl, not more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, and yet planning, by her own unaided efforts, the rescue of a prisoner from the strong Abbeytown gaol! Is she mad or inspired? If inspired, is it by a good or an evil spirit?—an angel or a devil! If I were a mystic, now, and believed in people being possessed, I should suppose that fragile, excited, half-frenzied girl, to be the medium and agent of some tremendous spirit acting through her. But whether she be mad, sane, or inspired, I will do what I promised, if it afford one chance in a million of saving Eudora. Oh, Eudora! Eudora! as the drowning catch at straws, I catch at this mad girl's unknown scheme to save you!"

He took up his hat and went out to walk to the prison.

He was immediately shown to the cell, where he found Eudora, as on the preceding day, reclining on the outside of the bed. Her little dog was coiled up contentedly by her side. Mrs. Barton was on guard. As Malcolm approached and took the little wasted hand she held out to him, he saw she was perceptibly paler, thinner, and feebler than on the day before

This increasing weakness was evident not only in the emaciation of her face and form, but in the faint tones of her voice and the slow motions of her hands. As he noticed this, the heart of Montrose sank within him.

"And yet," he thought, "why should I grieve for her waning life? It is better, far better, that she should sink gently into death here—even here in her prison cell, where her soul might depart in peace and privacy—than live to be dragged forth. Oh, God! oh, God!"

He groaned and buried his face in his hands, as if to shut out the image that arose before his mind's eye.

Eudora looked up at him uneasily, and with quick sympathy caught his mental vision. She could not have been paler than she had been before. But now her very lips blanched and quivered, and a spasm seized her throat and choked her utterance. This passed in a moment, and then she put up her hand and gently removed those of Malcolm, and looked in his face.

That face was convulsed with anguish; but with a mighty effort, he crushed down his emotions, seated himself by her side, took her hand, and held it in silence, as was often now his custom.

For a few moments neither trusted themselves to speak, but at length Eudora broke the silence by inquiring:

"Do you know why Annella has not been here these two days?"

"The officers of justice believe that her visits disturb you, dear," answered Malcolm, gently.

"Ah, I thought they would interdict her visits, poor child! She is so rash in her zeal for me. Do you know, Malcolm, that she even tried to bribe Mrs. Barton here to let her change clothes with me, so that I might escape in hers? Did she tell you?"

"No, she never told me that; but I know she would run any risk on earth for you, dearest, and so I am not surprised to hear it."

"I wonder if the attempt came to the ears of the officers, and if that was the reason why they stopped her visits?"

"No, Miss—oh, no, because there was nobody to tell but me, and I never dropped a hint of it," Mrs. Barton hastened to say.

"No, that was not the reason, dear Eudora; it was because she was considered too young and flighty to do you any real good by her visits, which it was also feared might disturb you," said Malcolm.

"And shall I see her no more?"

"Oh, yes; she called at my lodgings this morning to tell me why she has not been to see you these two days, and to send you her love, with the assurance that she would come on Tuesday, having the sheriff's promise of permission to do so."

Eudora shivered, for she remembered that Tuesday was the last day of her allotted life, and knew that Annella's next visit would be also her last one.

The hour of grace sped quickly away, and Malcolm arose to go. He stooped and pressed his farewell kiss upon Eudora's brow. He dared not trust himself to speak; he was thinking how swiftly the sands of her life were running out. But one more quiet visit, and then—the dreadful parting interview on Tuesday night—and then, unless the unknown scheme of Annella should succeed—as he did not dare to hope—death for Eudora and endless despair for himself! So he pressed his parting kiss in silence on her brow, and turned away.

Mrs. Barton happened to be relieved of her guard by the entrance of the other warder, and she left the cell at the same moment with Mr. Montrose.

Malcolm beckoned her to his side, and as they walked down the lobby, he said:

"I wished to speak to you alone, Mrs. Barton, to ask you about your charge. She seems wonderfully composed for so young a girl in so awful a position. I fear that it is only

assumed composure, for I see that she is sinking fast under her heavy misfortunes. Now, tell me, does she not put herself under great restraint when I am with her?"

"Well, sir, she certainly do seem much more composeder when you are here nor she do at any other time. I think, howsoever, that's partly because she do feel it to be a comfort and a support to her like to have you along with her; and partly because she do try to keep down her feelings for fear of hurting yours. Leastways, I know she don't give way to 'em as she does at other times," answered Mrs Barton, thoughtfully.

"How is she at other times?" inquired Mr. Montrose, anxiously.

"Why, sir, wariable, wery much so indeed; for sometimes she will be quiet enough for hours and hours together; and then, maybe, something will happen to bring her doom afore her all on a suddint—and she'll scream, and clap her hands over her eyes, and fall to shaking as if she wer' tuk with an agur fit. And when that's over, she'll turn on her face, and not move nor speak for hours and hours more."

Malcolm groaned with anguish.

"And sometimes, sir—and that hurts my heart worse nor all the rest—when she will be lying quite calm, she'll put her finger and thumb around her throat and press it, and then quickly drop her hand and scream with terror, and fall into another shaking agur fit."

Another involuntary groan burst from the overcharged breast of Malcolm, while Mrs. Barton continued:

"But, lor, sir! what could you expect from such a mere child as she is, with such a fate afore her? Why, sir, I've been in service here this twenty year, and I've seen the most strongest and hardenest of men as ever was, have their hair turn grey with the thoughts of what was afore them, between the day of conviction and the day of execution. So what could you expect of a poor, tender girl, with the scaffold staring her in the face? I wonder she

isn't dead already, for my part; and I am sure I think it would be a mercy and a blessing if she was."

"It would, indeed," muttered Malcolm.

"But there is one thing I dreads for her more nor all the rest—more even nor the last thing of all."

"And what is that?" inquired Malcolm, in a sinking voice.

"Why, sir, the reading o' the death-warrant to her; and it's my belief as the sheriff don't like the job himself, as he has put it off so long—and I doubt it'll be the death of her without any more trouble. Why, lor', sir, I've seen the dare-devilest ruffians, as you would think they'd go through fire and brimstone, and face Satan himself, blanch as white as a sheet at hearing of that read. Why, lor'! you see, sir, it do go into all the particulars, so cruel plain, telling all about how they are to be—"

"I know—I know!" hastily interrupted Malcolm, with sickening faintness stealing over him. "But, tell me, is this formality never in any case omitted?"

"I beg your pardon, sir—" said the perplexed wardress.

"Does not the sheriff sometimes fail to read the death-warrant to the condemned prisoner?"

"Not as ever I hear on, sir; no, I believe not. But sure you ought to be able to tell, sir."

"I know very little of these formalities," answered Malcolm.

They had by this time reached the lower hall, where their way divided.

Mrs. Barton courtesied, and turned off towards her own apartment; and Mr. Montrose, with breathless lungs, bursting heart, and burning brain, hurried out into the open air.

All that he had seen, heard and felt during this morning's visit to the prison, confirmed him in his resolution to keep faith with Annella, and he immediately set about making all external arrangements for a possible rescue.

Annella might be mad; her unknown scheme might be

vain, useless, dangerous, fatal. There might not be one chance in a million of its success; yet it was the only hope of rescue for Eudora, and as the despairing snatch at the very shadow of hope, he resolved to embrace it.

Good reason had the kind-hearted wardress to dread the ordeal to which Eudora's fortitude was soon to be subjected. Mrs. Barton had just gone into the cell to take her afternoon's turn at guarding the prisoner, when several footsteps were heard approaching, the door was unlocked, and the sheriff, attended by the gaoler, entered.

The manner of the sheriff was grave even to solemnity; that of the gaoler was very sorrowful.

Eudora hastily arose from her recumbent posture, and sat up, glancing in surprise and vague dread, but without the least suspicion of their errand, upon the intruders.

Mrs. Barton, who knew what was coming, got up and passed towards the door, crying:

"Let me go away, Mr. Anderson—please, sir, do! I can't stand it—indeed, sir, I can't!"

"Stay where you are, woman," answered the governor, in a low voice.

And Mrs. Barton, forced to obey, sank trembling into her seat.

"This is Mr. Rushton, the sheriff of the county, Miss Leaton, who has some business with you this afternoon," said the gaoler, in a faltering voice, as he presented the visitor.

Eudora arose, and slightly bowed in acknowledgment of the sheriff's presence, and then resumed her seat. But far from surmising the nature of his business with her, she flushed with a transient hope that the paper he carried in his hand might possibly be a commutation of her sentence—a respite, or even a pardon! While her face flushed and paled, her heart beat, and her pulses quickened with this hope, the sheriff slowly unfolded the document, and said:

"I have a necessary duty to perform, Miss Leaton, and

must request you to give your attention to the reading of this paper."

Something in his manner banished Eudora's new hopes, and brought back her vague fears, and while she gazed with eyes dilated by terror, the sheriff commenced in a distinct voice, and read, with all its plain, clear, cruel details, the warrant for her execution.

But before the reading of the warrant that consigned her to a speedy, public, shameful, and violent death, was completed, Eudora's fortitude gave way, and with a piercing shriek she fell to the floor.

"There, I hope and trust, with all my heart and soul, as you've finished her and put her out of her misery now!" sobbed Mrs. Barton, as she hastened to raise Eudora.

The sheriff, having done his painful duty, retreated from the cell, attended by the gaoler, and leaving Eudora to the care of the wardress.

Mrs. Barton lifted the swooning girl, and laid her upon the bed, and applied such restoratives as she kept at hand for her recovery. It was a long time before the deadly swoon could be broken by the pungent stimulants that were used. But at length Eudora, with a shiver, opened her eyes. Alas! return to consciousness was only return to thought, to memory, and to agonizing terror. Sobs, shrieks, and spasms that could not be controlled, expressed the anguish, despair, and wild affright that shook her life and reason to their foundations.

Mrs. Barton did all that the most tender nurse or mother could have done for her relief. She voluntarily remained with her through the whole of the afternoon and the night; but her endeavors to ameliorate the sufferings of her charge were all in vain. And in the morning, finding Eudora still pallid, collapsed, and shuddering, upon the very verge of dissolution, Mrs. Barton, when relieved from her long watch, hastened to the office, and said to the gaoler:

"I doubt my prisoner is a-dying sir; and though it might

be a mercy to let her die and go out of her misery, yet mayhap it's our duty to send for the medical man."

The gaoler immediately arose, and beckoning the wardress to follow him, hastened to the condemned cell, and after gazing mournfully upon the stricken girl for a few minutes, he said:

"I will send for the doctor; but no one else, not even Mr. Montrose, must be permitted to see her while she is in this precarious state."

And calling a turnkey who happened to be passing, he dispatched him for the medical attendant of the prison. The messenger had scarcely departed when Malcolm Montrose was heard approaching, attended by another turnkey. The gaoler, who was on the watch, went out to turn him back. Meeting him, he took his arm, and walked him off to a distant part of the lobby, where he paused to say to the astonished and half-offended young man:

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Montrose; I am very sorry to stop you, but the truth is, that ever since the death-warrant was read to that poor young creature yesterday afternoon, her courage has entirely given way, and she has been in such a precarious state that I fear the least accession of excitement might prove instantly fatal to her; and under these circumstances I dare not admit anyone, even yourself, to her cell until after our doctor has seen her."

"But I have the sheriff's order," urged Malcolm.

"Still I beg that you will not press it, sir. It is for her sake only that I entreat you to refrain until the doctor has made his visit."

"I see the necessity of doing as you advise But oh, Heaven! when, when will her long-drawn sufferings cease! It is but a few weeks since her arrest, yet since that day ages and ages of torture seem to have passed! Would to Heaven it were over for her!" exclaimed Malcolm, wildly.

"Try to compose yourself, Mr. Montrose. Come down to my room, and take something strong."

"I thank you, I require nothing; but with your consent I will go and sit in your office until I hear the doctor's report," answered Malcolm, accompanying the governor to the ward-room below, but refusing the refreshment that Mr. Anderson still pressed upon his acceptance.

Meanwhile Dr. Moss, the physician in ordinary to the prison, proceeded to the condemned cell.

Dr. Moss was a tall, fair-skinned, gray-haired old man, whom forty years' connection with the prison, and constant ministration to the worst forms of human suffering among the most desperate criminals of both sexes had not hardened, but rather softened; had not rendered harsh, obdurate and unfeeling, but rather tender, sympathetic, and compassionate.

He now entered Eudora's cell, and stood for a moment silently regarding her as she lay with her face turned down and hidden in the pillow, cold, pallid, collapsed, and shuddering.

Then beckoning Mrs. Barton to the door of the cell, he questioned her minutely as to the state of mind and frame that had preceded this asphyxia of the sufferer.

And the careful wardress described the girlish terrors of Eudora, and ended by saying:

"You can't expect a mere child like that to face quietly what makes the hardest men quail. Besides, doctor, we women cre'turs are ten thousand times worse afeard of being *hurt* nor we are of being killed. I am pretty nigh sure as it isn't the fear of death as has brought her to this state, but the horror of the violent death as is always afore her.

The doctor having learned all that he wished to know for his own guidance in this case, returned to the cell, seated himself beside the sufferer, took her hand, and said, gently:

"Look up, poor child, and let me see your face. I can do you good, though you may not yet believe it."

The deep-toned, tender, sympathetic voice of the Christian physician fell like balm upon the bruised heart of the

victim, and caused her to turn her wasted face and anguished eyes to meet the compassionate gaze and benignant countenance that was bent upon her in such deep commiseration.

"I can relieve your acute sufferings, Eudora. I can scatter all your terrors and give you ease," he repeated.

"Oh, can you change what is before me? Can you snatch me away from this doom, as you would rouse one up from a horrid night-mare? If you cannot do this you can do nothing for me!" she cried.

"I cannot change your fate, Eudora, but I can disarm it of its terrors," he answered, very gently.

She looked at him with a wild, incredulous gaze.

"The state of the mind depends so much upon the condition of the body, that I must bring your excited nervous system into some quietude before I can hope that you will listen to me with benefit," said the doctor, opening a small box and taking from it a minute lozenge, which he directed her to swallow.

Eudora obeyed, and the doctor sat watching the effect of the drug.

In a few moments the morphia had done its benign work, and soothed the agonized nervousness of the victim down to a state of serene repose, in which she could calmly contemplate her coming doom.

"You feel better now, my child," said Dr. Moss.

"Yes," she replied.

"And you can bear to speak of your position?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then, Eudora, I wish you to open your heart to me as to an old and experienced friend, who sympathizes with every phase of your sufferings, and can ameliorate them all. Tell me, now, what it was that filled your mind with such fear and horror as to overthrow your fortitude so completely. It was not fear of death I know; for even children meet death unblenchingly. What was it then? It will do you good to confess to me."

"You judge me rightly," said Eudora, as, calmed by the morphia, she now entered with perfect self-possession upon the dreaded subject. "It was not fear of death, for I should be happy if I could die quietly here in my bed. It was the manner of the death, the deep dishonor, and the mysterious, unknown, awful agony of that blindfolded, suffocating, helpless struggle with a violent death!"

"In a word, you dreaded excessive physical suffering."

"Oh, yes."

"My child, there will be no such suffering at all. The death you so much dreaded will be the easiest of all deaths."

She looked up at him with calm, incredulous wonder.

"Eudora, I speak the words of truth and soberness, as well as of science and experience," said the doctor, gravely.

"Ah, how do you know? How can any one know. I myself can only judge by this." Here she put her thumb and fingers towards her throat, but the doctor arrested her moving hand, and held it while he said:

"You must not do that—you will only frighten yourself with false terrors. An incomplete pressure like that is very distressing, a complete one is quite the reverse."

"Ah, how can we be sure of that?"

"By the light of science, which shows us that the instantaneous congestion of the brain consequent upon such a pressure prevents all suffering. So, my child, dismiss all dread of pain, you will not have to bear it."

"I do not know. No one has ever come back from that dread mystery to tell us what it was."

"Yes, but there has. There are several authentic instances on record of individuals who have been resuscitated after execution, and who have all agreed in testifying that the manner of death was easy, thus demonstrating the theory of science in that respect. But if you want farther confirmation, Eudora, you can have it in my own professional experience."

'Yours!" exclaimed Eudora, in quiet incredulity.

"Yes; I resuscitated a man who had, in a fit of despair, attempted to destroy himself in that very manner. He was found by his friends suspended from a tree in a grove, and when taken down was quite insensible, and apparently quite dead. But the vital spark had not fled, for when I was called to him, and took proper means to restore him to consciousness, I succeeded. He was very penitent for having, in a fit of despondency, tried to rush unbidden into the presence of his God. But what made his case most interesting to me, as a medical man, was his description of his sensations while undergoing that process. He described them as being without the least degree of suffering, and as resembling the effects produced by the first inhalations of chloroform, until, like one under the full influence of that drug, he lapsed into insensibility, and knew no more until his resuscitation; and now I hope you will believe me, and dismiss your fears of suffering."

"Oh, yes; I suppose I was a sad coward to dread torture so much."

"All women do, Eudora. It is their nature; their tender, delicate sensitive organizations shrink from torture. But now, what other feature is there in this fate that so distressed you, for the dread of physical agony was not all?"

"Oh, no, for there was the sense of deep dishonor."

"Yet you say that you are innocent?"

"I am weary of repeating that to incredulous ears, and yet God knows that I am innocent."

"Then trust in God to redeem your name from all lasting reproach, as your Christian faith teaches you to believe that He will; and consider also, dear child, that when, in a few more hours, you shall stand in the presence of that Divine Judge who knows your innocence, the opinion of the world you have left behind will be as nothing to your released and happy spirit. Should not such thoughts console you?"

"Oh, yes, they should, indeed. Oh! sir, you have given me comfort—such comfort as I could not have believed in before you came to me. I could not have imagined that any earthly power could have lifted me from the pit of black despair in which I seemed to have fallen. Heaven bless you, Doctor, for the help you have given me," said Eudora, holding out her hand to the kind physician, who pressed and released it, as he said:

"Now you must have another lozenge to put you to sleep. Take this little one, and compose yourself to rest, and when you awake I will see you again."

And thus having ministered to the mental and physical necessities of the sufferer, this good physician of the soul and body took his leave of the patient.

Beckoning Mrs. Barton outside the door, he enjoined her to keep everything quiet in and about the cell, as the reason, and even life of the prisoner depended upon her getting an undisturbed rest.

Then he went down to the lower hall, where his approach was anxiously watched for by Malcolm Montrose, who hastened out of the ward-room, eagerly inquiring:

"How is your patient, Doctor? Can I be permitted to see her?"

"She is better, and is composing herself to sleep, but you cannot see her, as she must not be disturbed to-day," answered the physician, kindly.

"And there will be but one more meeting between us—the parting interview of to-morrow," exclaimed Malcolm, in the extremity of mental anguish, as he left the prison.

He was seized with a burning anxiety to see Annella Wilder, but did not know where to find, or how to communicate with that eccentric girl. He therefore passed the remainder of the day in making the promised arrangements for the almost inconceivable possibility of Eudora's escape.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

What hears she?—a slight sound—
The opening of the cell's dark door,—
Bright eyes—a word, and nothing more.
Quickly she gazed around,
Then, passionate, flung her hands on high,
And with a sharp, wild, rapturous cry,
Fell swooning to the ground.—*Michell.*

EUDORA slept long and calmly, and awoke early on Tuesday morning, the last day of her allotted life. Thanks to the good physician's merciful ministrations, the frenzy of terror and the darkness of despair had alike vanished. Her nerves were wonderfully composed, and her mind perfectly clear.

"It is strange, Mrs. Barton," she said, as the wardress was assisting her to dress, "how well I am this morning, the very last day of my life. It seems to me, looking back on my past feelings, as if I had been very ill ever since my first arrest, and have only now recovered health and reason. And this is my last day, and I have made no preparations for death; but indeed I could not, and I see clearly now why I could not. First came the thunderbolt of my arrest; then the anguish of suspense before the trial; then the blackness of despair after conviction; and then the frenzy of terror that followed the reading of the death-warrant! What could I do amidst all that various suffering? But it has all gone, now; the suspense, the despair, and the terror have all taken flight, like evil spirits, and left my mind in a sweet, clear, sunny, almost buoyant state, although I am to die to-morrow morning. I hope this is not unnatural; I hope I am in my senses; for it is a very strange experience."

"It is tne goodness of God, and the skill of the doctor as His instrument, my poor, dear child. You are innocent and martyred, and so you are comforted by Heaven and earth," answered the wardress.

"I am not afraid to meet my Maker. I never was, even in the midst of my worst terrors. I have not got my peace to make with Heaven at this late hour, but I have much to do for those whom I shall leave behind, and I must set about it immediately."

"Dear saint, think of yourself; do not trouble your heart about any one else."

"Did Mr. Montrose call yesterday?"

"Yes, dear child, but you were then too ill to see any one. But I suppose he will come this morning, as usual."

"No, he will not. We agreed that as he is permitted but one visit in the day, he should not come on this last day until the evening, so as to see me at as late a period as possible before my death. You see how calmly I can speak of that now, Mrs. Barton."

"Thank God, my dear, though it breaks my heart to hear you."

After her frugal breakfast, Eudora asked for pen, ink and paper, and sat down to write her last wishes, to be confided to Malcolm.

Meanwhile, the chaplain of the prison, who had been very ill with fever for the last week, arose from his sick-bed to administer the last consolations of religion to the condemned girl.

He found Eudora seated at the little table and engaged in writing.

She arose as he entered, and held out her hand, saying:

"I am glad you have come to see me again on this last day, Mr. Goodall—sit down."

"I should have come before if I had been able to stand upon my feet," replied the clergyman, earnestly, as he sank quite exhausted in the offered chair.

"I am sorry to see that you are still so ill," she said, looking with sympathy upon his haggard face.

"Is it credible that you can have room in your heart for any other sorrow than your own great one?" inquired the clergyman, looking up in compassion at the face of the speaker.

And then, for the first time, he noticed the perfect serenity and almost cheerfulness of her countenance.

She perceived his surprise, and answered both his looks and words by saying:

"I do not know how it is, but I cannot grieve for myself now. I seem changed since yesterday; all the evil spirits of despair and terror that have been tormenting me for so many weeks past have vanished, and left my soul in a 'peace that passeth understanding,' a 'sunshine of the breast,' that I cannot comprehend, but only receive in awe and gratitude."

As Mr. Goodall did not immediately answer, but only watched her in silent wonder, she continued:

"I feel as if I were on the eve of a journey, going home to my father and mother, and friends, and above all, to that Heavenly Father who knows my innocence of this imputed guilt, and in whose Divine Mercy I have never ceased to trust through the darkest days of my despair and terror!"

Mr. Goodall was reading her very soul, and, therefore, he would not reply as yet.

Suddenly she held her hand out to him, and said:

"Mr. Goodall, hitherto you have supposed that I only protested my innocence because I hoped, through such protestations, to be believed and saved. But now you must know that not a shadow of hope remains to me."

"I do know it," said the minister, earnestly.

"And, therefore, now that I have lost all hope of man's mercy, and know that I must certainly die to-morrow morning, you will believe me when I repeat, as I hope for

God's mercy—I am guiltless of the crimes for which I am to suffer," said Eudora, solemnly.

"I *do* believe you; I am constrained to have faith in your innocence; dear Eudora, forgive me that I ever doubted you."

"There is nothing to forgive, since it was inevitable that you should at first think as all the world did; but there is much to be grateful for, now that you have confidence in me. And now that we understand each other, you can indeed give me much comfort," said Eudora, holding out her hand, which he took and held, while he said:

"I will attend you to the last, dear, unhappy girl."

"But you are ill, and must not fatigue yourself."

"I will be with you to the last," repeated the minister. "It will be time enough for me to rest when you are—in Heaven."

Meanwhile, what had become of Annella Wilder, since her daily visits to the prison had been prohibited, and her eccentric inroads into Malcolm Montrose's lodgings had ceased?

Annella, for the last few days, had restricted herself to the Anchorage and its immediate environs, where her burning cheeks and blazing eyes, and feverish manner, excited the serious alarm of her relatives.

"That dear baby is going to be ill, and she ought to be looked after," said Mrs. Stilton, who immediately ordered a foot-bath and certain herb-teas to be taken by the patient at night.

And with unusual docility Annella obeyed, saying to herself:

"I have need of a cool head, and would drink a pint of bitterest wormwood, and plunge my limbs into boiling water, if I thought that would take away the burning pain in my head that prevents me from thinking clearly."

And so she took—not her own desperate prescription, but the milder one of Grandmother Stilton. And she

arose the next morning, looking like an expiring fire, and professing herself much better.

But on this last day no one took notice of Annella. All the inmates of the house seemed to be possessed of a sort of half-restrained frenzy, in view of the tragedy to be enacted the next morning—that dread tragedy, in which the life of a young girl was to be publicly offered up in expiation of an atrocious crime.

They had all known Eudora, and even those who believed her guilty felt overshadowed and oppressed by the horror of her coming doom, now that it drew so near.

The two ancient dames—they were both so old that a trifling difference of eighteen years between the ages of the mother and daughter was of no sort of account—sat lovingly, side by side, in their easy-chairs, near the drawing-room chimney-corner, where, summer and winter, a little fire was always kept burning for cheerfulness.

"I have lived too long, Abby, my dear—I have lived too long, now that I see little girls as should be innocent as cherubs, and never come to no more harm than soiling their bibs, and getting smacked by their nurse, actually dipping their hands in human blood, and being hanged. Yes, Abby, my dear, I have lived clear away into an age of the world as I wasn't born and brought up in, and don't know nothing about. And if the good Lord hasn't forgot to send for me, I don't know the reason why I am left. And I think I had better go," said Mrs. Stilton, despondingly.

"Don't say that, mother. You are the head of the family, which I don't know what we would do without you. And I have been used to you all my life. And me and you have always been together ever since I can remember. Think o' the poor little haberdashery-shop as we kept when we was both left widdies!—and how you comforted me when that boy o' mine run away and went to sea; which little did we think he would ever rise to be an admiral and

make our fortin', and make ladies of us, and never be ashamed of us 'ither! And since that we have always been so comfortable together! And s'pose now I was to see that chair o' your'n empty! Oh! whatever should I do! *Oh, hoo! hoo! hoo!* You'd never go and die and leave me an orphan after all these years at my time of life! *Oh, hoo! hoo! hoo!*" whimpered the old lady, in the piteous grief of age; for though the younger, she was in mind and body much the feebler of the two.

"There, there, there, now, Abby, my dear, don't cry. I didn't mean it. I won't die! I'll live to take care of you and your boy! Didn't I promise your dear father, on his death-bed, as I would bear up for the sake o' the child?—and haven't I beared up? Good Lord, yes! how many years! Years of t'iling and striving and struggling for life! And now, in these latter days, when rest and peace have come, is it likely as I will give up and die? No, Abby, my dear, not I! I think as the longer I've lived in this world the better I like it, that I do! Only I was upset this morning along of thinking about that poor dear baby. There, then, don't cry, Abby! I'm sure if you want me to do it, I'd just as lief keep on living all the time as not. I'm sure I don't see what's to hinder me. I'm noways ill, thank God, nor yet dissatisfied with this world. There's many a dark, stormy day as has cleared off just at sunset. And that has been the way of our day of life, Abby, my dear, and now I don't care if our clear, pleasant twilight lasts forever. I know heaven is a better land; but then I was always humble-minded, and easy satisfied, and so I'm contented with this earth, and don't long for no better till the Lord pleases. Leastways, Abby, I won't die till you are ready to go along with me."

While the old ladies talked in this childish, affectionate way, the admiral walked up and down the lawn in front of the house, with his hands clasped behind him, in troubled thought. He, too, was overshadowed by the "coming

event." He had no glance even for the fair Princess Pezzilini, who, calm, placid, and elegant, occupied her usual morning seat in the bay-window, where she employed herself with some graceful fancy-work, while Master Valerius Brightwell sat upon a footstool at her feet, reading aloud for her amusement, and occasionally glancing up at her with all a boy's shy admiration of a beautiful woman.

Annella had not been seen since breakfast-time. But when the family assembled for luncheon at two o'clock, she was called, and appeared with cheeks again so deeply flushed, and eyes so bright and restless, that Mrs. Stilton exclaimed:

"That child is on the very verge of brain-fever!"

And she not only ordered her off to bed, but went herself to see her order obeyed.

Annella made no resistance; but as soon as her head was on the pillow, and a brown paper, wet with vinegar, was laid upon her brow, she said:

"Now, grandmamma, all I want is to be let to go to sleep, and if Madame Pezzilini will be kind enough to let Tabitha come and sit by me, I shall do very well."

"But why, Tabitha? Why not your own woman?" inquired the old lady.

"Because I *hate* my own woman, and I love Tabitha—and—it will make my head ache to talk more about it."

"Well, well, my baby, it shall be just as you please," said the indulgent old dame, shutting the door softly and retiring.

A few moments passed, and then the door was as softly opened, and Tabitha, stepping lightly, entered. She first went noiselessly to the windows, and made them quite dark by closing the storm-shutters, and then stole silently to the side of the bed to see if Annella slept.

"I am awake, dear Tabitha; though I wish very much to sleep and recruit myself for a few hours if I can. What o'clock is it?"

"Half-past two, Miss Wilder."

"Very well; dip a towel in that iced vinegar and lay it on my head, and let me sleep, if possible, until five o'clock. Then, Tabitha, wake me."

"Wouldn't it be better as I should let you sleep your sleep out, Miss?"

"No; if you love Eudora Leaton, wake me at five o'clock."

"Oh, Miss, don't speak of her now! It almost drives me crazy."

"Hush! She shall be saved if you will wake me at five o'clock. In the meantime I *must* lie quiet and sleep if I can, or I shall go mad!"

"But is there—is there a chance of saving her? Oh, Miss! if I thought there was I would be a'most willing to lay down my life for it."

"There is a chance—I cannot explain now. I can do nothing before five o'clock. Until then I *must* try to compose myself! Tabitha, *will* you obey me?"

"Yes, yes, Miss.—surely I am afraid she is going out of her senses," added the girl, *sotto voce*, as she wetted the napkin in iced vinegar, and laid it upon Annella's burning head, and then silently took her seat beside the bed.

Annella closed her eyes, and lay still as death, but whether she slept or not, Tabitha had no means of ascertaining in that darkened chamber.

Hour after hour passed, and Tabitha was on the point of dropping asleep herself, when the striking of the little golden-toned ormulu clock on the mantel-piece aroused her.

"It is five o'clock, Miss Annella," she said, softly, bending over the quiet girl.

"Then go and bring me my tea, and say that I am better, but shall not come down this afternoon, and that I do not wish to be disturbed this evening. And listen, Tabitha, say not a word of what passed between us before I composed myself to sleep," murmured Annella, without chang-

ing her position or even opening her eyes. She seemed as one hoarding every atom of her strength for one final effort.

"No, Miss; I shan't say nothing at all of what has passed between us, at least not yet," answered Tabitha, leaving the room to obey.

In due time she reappeared with the tray, upon which was neatly arranged Annella's little chamber tea-service.

The girl arose, bathed her face and head, arranged her hair and dress, and then drank her tea. After which, she called Tabitha to her side, and said:

"I am sure you love Miss Leaton—"

"Yes, that I do! I would lay down my life for her," said Tabitha, beginning to sob.

"In that case you would not betray anyone who tried to serve her, to comfort her, or even to rescue her?"

"I'd bite my tongue off first! Sure I have proved as much!"

"Yes. I always believed that you knew more than you chose to tell of her first escape from Allworth Abbey. Well, Tabitha, listen now. I have an order to visit Eudora to take a final farewell of her this evening. I have, also, in my own mind, a plan for rescuing her even at this late hour—"

"Lord, Miss Annella! what ever can that be, and could you ever carry it through—and wouldn't the law punish you if you did?" inquired Tabitha, earnestly.

"I cannot tell you—it is enough for you to know that I shall go to visit her this evening, but my visit to the prison must not be known—my absence from this house must not even be suspected, lest it lead to discovery; therefore, Tabitha, you must let me out the back way; and you must remain in this room, and if anybody comes to inquire after me, put them off with some excuse; and at night go out and lock the door after you, so that no one can get into the room and miss me. And when you come up again,

bring a basin of gruel, as if I had need of it. Ask leave to sleep in my room to take care of me to-night; but on no account let any one else come in. You understand this, Tabitha?"

"Every word of it, Miss Annella."

"Well, now hear my last words of all. After the family have all retired, and the house is quiet, and everybody is asleep, steal out of this room, lock the door behind you, and bring away the key, and creep down stairs and out of the house, and watch for me at the lower park gate. Can you do this?"

"Surely, Miss Annella."

"But you look frightened already."

"It is enough to frighten one, but I'll do it."

"And now, what are they all about down stairs?"

"The family are all gathered around the grand piano, listening to Madame Pezzilini playing and singing—Heaven help them! and the servants are all at dinner in the servants' hall."

"That is well! It is the very hour for me to steal out of the house unobserved. Lock the door and come with me, Tabitha."

They left the room, glided down the back stairs, and out at the back door.

Annella flew across the lawn, through the park, out upon the downs, and into the high road. She ran along a little way, and then struck into a by-path leading through a narrow, wooded valley, or "coombe," lying between two rolling uplands of the downs, and leading towards Abbey-town. As soon as she found herself out of the reach of discovery and pursuit, and safely hidden in this thicket, she sat down to recover her breath and to still the violent throbbing of her heart.

Surely if Tabitha Tabs had noticed the signs of excitement and almost of insanity in the expression of Annella's face, she had not consented to her leaving the house.

But the darkness of the bed-chamber and of the narrow back stair-case had obscured the woman's vision, and the assumed calmness and self-restrained manner of Annella had disarmed her caution.

But any rambler passing that way, and seeing Annella as she sat, with glowing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and restless, frenzied manner, would have felt justified in taking her in charge upon his own responsibility, and delivering her up to her friends as a wandering maniac.

But withal Annella had as yet a strange, self-regulating power that enabled her to control these frequently-recurring fits of excitement.

She sat quietly in the cool shadows of the wood until its spirit had entered into her soul, and for the time, at least, calmed its fever.

Then she arose and took her way towards the prison.

With the order in her pocket, she was at once admitted.

"Has Mr. Montrose been here to day?" was the first question she put to the turnkey, who conducted her.

"No, he is not to come until six o'clock," answered the man.

"Very well; go on."

She was admitted to the cell, where she found Eudora sitting by the little table engaged in reading the Scriptures. At her feet was coiled up her little dog, and on the table was laid a folded paper. Upon seeing the visitor, she put her hand out, and taking that of Annella, drew her up to her side and kissed her, saying:

"I thank you for coming to see me once more, dear girl. I am not afraid, now, Annella! Every dark cloud has passed from my spirit, and I feel strangely well. And now I begin to understand how it was that Jane Grey and Anne Boleyn, and so many other young and timorous women, were enabled to meet unmerited death with so much fortitude. I think that strength comes at the very last by the gift of God." And so saying, Eudora moved and

seated herself on the side of the bed to yield the only chair to her visitor.

Annella did not trust her tongue to speak. She sat down with her back to the light, that Eudora might not see the disturbance of her face.

So there fell silence in the cell for a few moments, and then Eudora arose and approached the table, took up the pocket Bible, and wrote a few lines on the flyleaf. Then laying it upon the lap of the visitor, she said:

"You will keep it for my sake, dear?"

Annella's hand closed over the book, but she made no reply.

The dead silence of the young girl surprised and troubled Eudora, who perceived in it a sympathy too deep and painful for words.

At length the striking of a distant clock was faintly heard. As the last stroke of six died away, Annella started up, threw her arms around Eudora, strained her to her bosom, pressed a kiss upon her forehead, and murmured, in a fainting voice:

"Mr. Montrose will be here in a moment; I will not stay to disturb your interview. Good-bye—Good-bye!" and hurried from the cell.

Even this failed to disturb the almost supernatural calmness of Eudora, and saying merely: "I will rest now," she lay down upon the outside of the cot.

Mrs. Barton occupied her usual seat in the corner of the cell.

A few moments passed, and then steps were heard approaching. The door was opened, and Malcolm Montrose, ushered in by the governor, who immediately retreated, entered the cell. Malcolm's face was fearfully pale, and bore all the signs of extreme mental anguish. It was evident that he put a severe restraint upon himself, and exhibited a merely external fortitude that might at any moment give way.

She, too, though now so calm, was so wasted, wan, and deadly fair, that she seemed more like a spirit of the air than a maiden of mortal mould.

As she approached, she held out one thin, blue, pale, transparent hand, and taking his, drew him towards her.

They looked into each other's faces intently for a moment with unspeakable love and grief, and then his fortitude utterly failed him, and he dropped upon his knees by her side, buried his face in his hands, and bursting into sobs, wept such bitter tears as are only pressed, like drops of life-blood, from the mighty heart of man by the extremity of anguish.

A spasm of agony passed over Eudora's still face. She who had ceased to feel for herself suffered acutely for him. With a supreme effort she controlled her rising emotions, and, but for the fluttering of the muscles in her transparent throat, and the quivering of her blue lips, she seemed calm as before.

She put her arm around his bowed head, drew it upon her bosom, and held it gently there while she murmured :

" Dear Malcolm, this wrings your heart cruelly, I know. You could endure it with fortitude if it were yourself instead of me. It is for my fate alone that you grieve ; and your grief is the only thing that troubles me. But do not weep so bitterly ; remember that in a few short hours all my earthly troubles will be over. And if it is the manner of my death that appals you, remember that hundreds as young, as delicate, and as innocent as your Eudora, have endured as dark a doom. And think that I have strength given me to meet my fate, and reflect that by this hour to-morrow it will be all the same to Eudora's emancipated spirit as if she had died in a bed of purple and fine linen, with ministering friends around her. And now look up, dear friend. We have but an hour to pass together, and I wish you to try to calm yourself and listen

to me, for there are some things that I want to commission you to do."

While Eudora was speaking, the sobs that burst from Malcolm's agonized bosom shook his whole frame. But with with an almost superhuman effort he subdued the storm of anguish, and forced himself to be calm.

Then, still kneeling by her side, he took her wasted hand in his own, gazed with unutterable love in her spirit-like face, and listened with reverential tenderness to her last words.

With her hands still clasped in his, and her eyes dwelling upon his with unutterable love and faith, she spoke:

"Dear Malcolm, when you were here the other day I requested you to promise me that you would mingle with the crowd to-morrow, and place yourself near the—the scene of my death, so that at the very last I might look upon the face of a friend. Do you remember?"

"Yes, dearest Eudora; and I will keep my promise—ay, if it drives reason from its throne—as it is sure to do," he added, mentally.

"But I release you from that promise, Malcolm. It should never have been asked or given; the trial is too great for human nature to bear; a woman, even a fragile girl, has strength given her to endure that which it would kill or craze the man who loves her to witness; therefore you must not see me die.

"But, dear Eudora—"

"Now, hear me out before you interrupt me. I have released you from *that* promise, but there is another which I wish you to make me—only one, dear Malcolm; for though there are several requests that I wish to make of you, there is but one promise by which I mean to bind your faith."

"And what is that, dear Eudora?"

"I wish you to promise me, on your honor as a gentleman, and your faith as a Christian, to obey the one single command that I shall give you."

"I promise, dear Eudora."

"Then, my order is this: that you take the six o'clock train for London to-morrow morning, so as to be far from the scene that must be enacted here. I have your promise. I have given you the order, and you are pledged to obey it whether you like or not."

"I am pledged," groaned Montrose, dropping his face in his hands.

There was silence between them for a few moments, and then she spoke:

"And now, dear Malcolm, for the requests that I have to make of you, and that I feel sure you will grant without a promise."

"Be sure that all your requests are at this moment as sacred to me as the laws of God."

"Heaven bless you, dear Malcolm."

"What is it you wish me to do, Eudora?"

"To carry out a plan which I would accomplish if I might be permitted to live."

She paused for a moment, as if uncertain how to open her communication, and then at length said:

"I was the heiress of Allworth, Malcolm, and after me you are the sole heir. You will be very wealthy, Malcolm, for I am told that the forfeiture will not be enforced—"

"Oh, Eudora! can you think of these things at this moment?"

"Yes; I can think of everything that requires to be thought of. Pray let me proceed. You will have abundant means of doing good. For my sake I wish you to be a Providence to that poor widow with whom I lodged in the Borough, and her thirteen children—what a family! and she was willing to have made it fourteen, and even fifteen, by keeping the Captain's orphan daughter, and myself also, if there had been any need. Hers is a terrible struggle with the world to win daily bread for all those ravenous young mouths; and well and bravely does she maintain it.

Now, dear Malcolm, as I firmly believe that there is not a woman in this world more worthy of assistance, I wish you to give her no merely transient help, but such permanent aid as shall establish herself and children in comfortable independence for life. I heard her say the house she occupies was for sale. Buy it and give it to her; renew the furniture and stock the shop. It will take but a few hundred pounds—that you will never miss—but to her and her children what a fortune it will be!"

"If it took thousands, Eudora, it should be done, and not only because they would be well bestowed, but because you desire it."

"I know it. Well, when you have made her comfortable in the way I have indicated, next find out what trades or professions she would like her sons and daughters to follow, and pay the fees to apprentice them. That will provide for all their future lives, and relieve the good mother from the great burden of care."

"It shall be done Eudora, and in your own dear name, so that for years after you have become an angel in heaven, the widow and her children shall bless your memory."

"Ah, well, I feel the need that some one should bless me."

"Many will do so, dear saint! And now what more shall I do?"

"Not much; only when I am gone, do not let my little dog perish. Mrs. Barton will keep her for a few days, until you can call and fetch her."

"Dear girl, be sure that there will be few things in this world so precious to me as the little creature that you loved. And now what else? Speak all your wishes; tell me all that I can do for you, for to obey all your commands will be the only course to save me from madness—the only purpose for which I shall bear to live—except one! yes, except one!"

"There is nothing else whatever, dear friend?"

"Nothing else? You ask nothing for yourself—nothing

for your own memory! Even at this supreme hour your thoughts are all for the good of others. Yet, dear saint, though in your sweet resignation you have not asked it, here I make you one solemn promise, one binding oath, one sacred vow! Here, with my hand upon your martyred head—here, speaking to your innocent heart—here, in the sight of the all-seeing God—I pledge my whole life, fortune, and honor to the one sacred purpose of discovering the real criminal, redeeming your memory from all reproach, and establishing your innocence beyond all question!" said Malcolm, solemnly sealing his vow by pressing a kiss upon her forehead.

"Thanks, thanks for this devotion, dearest friend. And now bid me a gentle good-night and go."

"So soon—has it come?" aspirated the young man, as all the blood in his veins seemed to turn back in its course, and roll in with annihilating force upon his heart. "Must I leave you?"

"It is my own tongue that bids you go, dear Malcolm. Go, while we still have some self-command left; go, and leave me to God!"

At this very moment also a warder appeared at the cell door. He did not speak, but the mere event of his appearance there announced that the moment of separation had arrived. She raised him and threw herself upon his bosom. He strained her to his heart in the unutterable agony of a last embrace. A moment thus, and then her arms relaxed, and she sank back fainting upon her pillow.

Malcolm, blinded, giddy, and stunned by despair, reeled from the cell.

The lobby, lighted only here and there at long intervals by lamps in high scones, was very dusky. As he rushed along its gloom, he suddenly felt his wrist caught by a thin, fiery hand, that seemed to scorch into his flesh, while a fierce, hot whisper pierced his ear, saying:

"*Be on the watch to-night at the appointed place!*"

The burning, wiry grip, the eager, stinging tones were those of Annella Wilder. But before he could reply to her words, almost indeed, before he had recognized her, she had vanished.

And the next minute he was joined by the warder, who had only lingered behind to lock the door, and who now attended him down the stairs and saw him fairly outside the prison walls.

He heard the great gate close with a loud clang, the key turn, the bolts shove into their grooves, the bars fall into their places, and he knew that the prison was closed up for the night.

But where was Annella?

He looked up and down the highway and all around, in expectation of seeing that strange creature, whom he supposed must have left the building before he did, and with whom, as the despairing and the frenzied snatch at the faintest shadows of hope, he wished to confer. But he looked in vain; she was nowhere visible.

He well understood the meaning that her words were intended to convey. But were they not the words of madness? Who could tell?

"Be on the watch to-night at the appointed place," she had said.

Be on the watch? Aye, that he surely would, without the need of warning; for could he go home and go to rest upon this last bitter night? Ah, no! The only thing that he could bring himself to do was to pace up and down the road beneath the prison walls, praying for her—praying for himself—until the dawn of the fatal day should compel him to keep his promise to Eudora, and throw himself into the first morning train, to fly from the scene of her martyrdom.

But with the constant echo of Annella's last words in his ear came the memory of the promise he had made her

—an insane promise, but otherwise harmless and certainly binding. A part of it he had already kept.

There was a small vessel anchored in a quiet cove, five miles from Abbeytown, and a boat chained at the beach. There was his fast horse, Fleetfoot, in the stables of the Leaton Arms. There was not one chance in a billion, not the shadow of a hope, not the faintest indication of a possibility that any of these preparations would be of the least use; yet he had madly promised to complete them, and he must keep his promise Still half stunned, blind, and dizzy with despair, he went on to the town, got his horse from the stables, rode slowly through the woods until it was quite dark, then tied Fleetfoot in the thicket behind the prison, and went round and resumed his walk and watch before the front gates.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE BURNING PRISON.

"The doomed girl is silent,
I watch with her now,
And her pulse beats no quicker,
Nor flushes her brow.

'The small hand that trembled,
When last in my own,
Lies patient and folded
And colder than stone."

MALCOLM paced up and down before the prison walls. The sky was "blind with a double dark" of night and clouds. The huge building itself seemed only a blacker shadow in the black scene. But not darker was the night without than the soul within the solitary watcher. Why did he

walk there? Not only because he had promised Annella to do so. Not, either, with the faintest hope of saving the martyr-girl who lay within those strong walls awaiting her doom. No; but to be near her in her sorrow, to watch with her as we watch beside the dead. Who can estimate the anguish of that dark vigil? The deep-voiced clock at the top of one of the towers struck each hour in its turn, and each stroke sounded like a knell upon his ear and heart. He wondered if she heard them too, or if Heaven had blessed her with sleep in these last hours. If so, would to Heaven she might never wake to the horrors of the morning.

While these agonizing thoughts were lacerating his bosom, he raised his eyes towards the east wing of the building, in which she lay, and he was startled to see the gratings strongly defined against a bright, ruddy light shining within!

What was the matter that the deadly darkness of this massive structure, which an instant before had seemed but a shapeless mass of shadows piled up against the midnight sky, should now be illumined so ominously? Was she ill? dying? Heaven, in its mercy, grant that she might be!

But while he gazed with suspended breath, the lighted row of gratings suddenly darkened, and belched forth volumes of lurid smoke, pierced by tongues of flame!

THE PRISON WAS ON FIRE!

"Oh, Heaven! she might escape her impending doom, but only perishing by the most fearful of deaths!—perishing by fire with hundreds of others!

He rushed to the gate, seized the iron handle of the bell that communicated with the door-keeper's room, and rang it loudly.

Another moment, and the great bell of the prison sounded from the tower, rousing by its deep-toned thunder all the sleepers of the neighborhood, while cries of

"Fire! fire! fire!" burst in every tone of terror, anguish, and despair from the inmates of the burning building.

Still but another instant, and crowds of half-dressed men and even women, who seemed to have started up from the depths of the earth in the darkness of the night, came pouring towards the building. The great gates were opened—when, how, or by whom Malcom scarcely knew. Bewildered by his trouble, he was carried with the crowd and hurried on until he found himself in the great hall of the prison.

Within, as without, the most fearful panic prevailed. Warders, turnkeys, and door-keepers, roused from deep sleep by the horrid alarm of fire, hurried hither and thither like men bereft of their senses.

In the ward where Eudora's cell was situated the darkness was intense and the smoke suffocating. Malcolm, who had hastened thither, could scarcely breathe the air. While blindly making his way towards her door, from which he heard the voice of the wardress shrieking "Fire!" and "Help!" he *felt* rather than saw two figures meet in the darkness.

"Is that you, Nally?" demanded the voice of the first, which Malcolm recognized as that of the governor.

"Yes, sir," replied a husky, smoke-smothered voice.

"Take this key, then, and release the condemned prisoner. Slip these handcuffs upon her, and hurry her forward to the west-wing strong-room. Don't let her escape in this confusion. I must go and look after the poor wretches above," said the governor, in an agitated voice, as he hurried away to the other end of the lobby.

Malcolm groped along, keeping as near as he could to the figure that he still *felt* rather than saw moving before him. Screams of "Fire" and "Help" still came from the condemned cell, which now, like the lobby, was as dark as pitch. Malcolm came up with the other just at the cell door. He held his breath with suspense, but the invisible

figure beside him breathed quickly and fiercely as they stood there together.

A panic of astonishment transfixed Malcolm as he felt that hot breath upon his cheek. An instant, and the cell door was unlocked and thrown open, and Mrs. Barton, distracted with fright, rushed out past them, to make good her escape from the burning building. Another instant and the mysterious figure, who had plunged into the darkness of the cell, issued forth, and dropped a light, soft burden upon Malcolm's breast, whispering fiercely :

"She is saved! Fly for your life and hers; look not behind you!"

Oh, Heaven! it was Annella's voice! And she had kept her word!

But he felt that there was not an instant to lose. Pressing the light form of the girl close in his arm, he ran along through the darkness and the suffocating smoke, through the lobby, and down the stairs, and out into the free air.

The smoke, the darkness, the crowd, and the panic befriended him. He passed the bounds of the prison unobserved, and hurried on towards the thicket where his horse was tied. As he pressed through the dark crowd without, he heard many remarks.

"The fire broke out in the prison wardrobe-room, where they keep the clothing," said one.

"No one knows how it broke out," said another.

"They have saved all the prisoners, poor wretches!" exclaimed a woman.

"They'll soon bring the fire under, too," observed a man.

No one noticed Malcolm hurrying along with his beloved burden enveloped in a dark shawl. All eyes were fixed on the ignited building, upon the walls of which the fire-engines, which had now arrived, were playing freely.

Malcolm reached the thicket in safety. He sat down for a moment to rest Eudora and uncovered her face to give her air. He thought that she had swooned, but this was

not so. She was pale, and weak, and limber, but breathing and conscious. She was the first to speak. Raising her eyes to his, she asked:

"What is all this? What has occurred?"

"You are saved, dearest Eudora!"

"How?"

"I scarcely know myself. Ask no questions yet, dear one, but rally all your strength to fly with me."

He placed her gently on a bank, where she could rest against the trunk of a tree. He led his horse to the spot, stooped and raised her to the seat before him, and rode slowly and carefully until he was out of the wood. Then putting spurs to his horse, he galloped swiftly towards the sea-coast. As his horse rushed onward Malcolm turned to look at the fire, and was gratified to see that the flames were certainly in process of extinction. With a lighter heart he galloped along the beach until at length he reached the cove, where his hired vessel lay at anchor.

Day was now dawning, and by its faint light they discerned the little boat upon the sands, and the vessel standing off a short distance from the shore.

Malcolm, leaving the horse to his fate, placed Eudora in the boat, pushed it off, took up the pair of oars, and rowed rapidly to the vessel.

The captain was on deck, ready to receive his passengers, whom he had been led to believe were only a pair of "true lovers" running away to be married.

"Poor young lady, but she is dreadfully faint," he said, as he received Eudora from Malcolm's arms, and bore her into the cabin, where he laid her gently upon the berths.

"She is; but rest and safety will restore her. When can you sail?"

"This instant! the tide has turned."

"Up Anchor!" shouted the captain, hurrying upon deck.

The anchor was raised, the canvas was unfurled to the breeze, and the little vessel sailed away upon the blue sea.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### ANNELLA'S RETURN.

"For the soul of a sinner
Let masses be said;
The sin shall be nameless,
And nameless the maid."

Long and fearful was the watch kept by poor Tabitha Tabs, who had stationed herself at the back gate of the lawn to await Annella's return. As hour after hour passed away she grew more and more anxious. Where could the strange girl be? When would she come back? Would she ever come back? If not, what would be the consequences? Tabitha shuddered even to conjecture.

At length, when she had grown almost hysterical with suspense, anxiety, and terror, she was startled by seeing a light rising in the distance. It was the burning prison! It was too far off for her to hear the cries of "Fire!" or even the alarm-bells, so she could not know what building was in flames; but the fascination of the fire, lighting up the midnight sky, kept her gazing open-eyed and open-mouthed, and forgetful of all her causes of anxiety. She would even have called her fellow-servants to share the delight of this spectacle, but that she feared they would question how she came to be up and watching, and might thus discover the absence of Annella, who might even return while they were all enjoying the pageantry of this illuminated midnight sky.

While she still gazed upon the scene, with these thoughts revolving through her mind, there was a sharp rap at the gate, followed by the voice of Annella, wildly demanding admittance.

"Lord sake, Miss Annella, I am glad you have come at last! I never spent such an anxious night in all my life. Wherever have you been? And you shall never go out

in this way again with *my* connivance! And can you tell me what house that is a-fire?" inquired Tabitha, as she unbolted the gate, and put out her hand to draw in the returning fugitive.

But the hand she took was burning hot, and the words that replied to her were wild and incoherent.

Tabitha could not see the face of Annella, but she was greatly alarmed, and holding the hand of the excited girl, she hurried her on to the house, up the back stairs and into her chamber. There she struck a light and looked at Annella's face. That face was fearful to behold. The cheeks were burning with fever; the eyes were blazing with frenzy.

"Good Lord! the girl is delirious!" cried Tabitha, in affright.

But, panic-stricken as she was, she had the presence of mind to undress Annella and place her in the bed, and put away all her clothing, and set the room in order before she gave the alarm. Then, indeed, she aroused the housekeeper, telling her that Miss Wilder was extremely ill and raving mad, and that a physician should be summoned at once.

Barbara Broadsides felt herself quite equal to such an emergency, and therefore declined to wake up her old mistresses before their accustomed hour. But she aroused Mr. Jessup, and dispatched him to Abbeytown to fetch a doctor, who arrived about the dawn of day. He pronounced the illness of Annella to be a most alarming type of brain-fever, and applied the proper remedies.

This was the beginning of a long and dangerous illness, during which the delirious girl continually raved of fire and floods, perils and rescues; but as no one but Tabitha in that house knew the secret of her absence that night, her talk was all considered to be the mere wanderings of a mind excited and deranged by fever, as, perhaps, it might have been.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE WRECK AND THE DISCLOSURE.

"Storm that, like a demon,
Howls with horrid note
Round the toiling seamen
In the tossing boat—
Drive her out to sea!

"Sleet, and hail, and thunder—
And ye winds that rave
Till the sands thereunder
Tinge the sullen wave—
Drive her out to sea!"

THE little vessel sailed onward over the blue sea. She was bound for a small and distant port on the coast of France, but she made slow way against a wind almost dead a-head.

Leaving Eudora sleeping in the cabin-berth, Malcolm went on deck to get a little fresh air. While standing in the forward part of the vessel, he observed a man with his back turned and his head bowed upon his breast, in an attitude of deep dejection, leaning against the mast. Something in the general form and air of this man seemed half familiar and half alarming to Montrose. Unable to analyze his instincts in regard to this stranger, he beckoned the captain to approach, and inquired, in a tone of displeasure:

'Who is that man? How is it that you have taken another passenger, when I bargained for the sole use of the vessel?"

"Why, sir, he is not a passenger, but a hand I picked up at Abbeyport, to replace one of my men who is too ill for this trip," answered the captain.

"What is his name?"

"Antony More."

"Antony More!" repeated Malcolm to himself, as he walked up to the stranger, and confronted—Antonio Morio, the *soi-disant* seneschal of the Princess Pezzilini!"

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature. What have you to say why I should not forthwith pitch you into the sea, Signor Antonio?" inquired Malcolm, sternly.

"This, Mr. Montrose!—that, so help me Heaven, I will not betray you, nor that sweet young lady in the cabin," answered the man, not in broken English, but in such good vernacular that it might have been his mother tongue.

"Why are you here?"

"That is my secret! Torture should not wring it from me. Pitch me into the sea if you like, Mr. Montrose! I'd quite as lief, you would! I shall say no more."

Full of thought, Malcolm walked away from this man, whom he observed was as pale as death, and looked as if recently recovered from some nearly fatal illness."

"The wind is rising," said the captain; "I fear we shall have a gale."

Malcolm hoped not, and went below to carry such refreshments as the vessel afforded to Eudora. After she had partaken of them, she expressed a wish to go up on deck, and Malcolm assisted her to ascend.

"Oh, dear friend! if you could conceive the rapture of moving in wide space, breathing free air, and looking upon the boundless sea and sky once more!" exclaimed Eudora, sinking upon the couch of rugs and cushions that Malcolm had prepared for her upon the deck.

He sat down at her feet, and began to tell her of their destination, and that immediately upon their arrival it would be necessary for them to be united in marriage, and that then they would sail for America, and commence life together.

Eudora listened with calm delight.

But while they talked the wind was rising rapidly and lashing the waves into fury. The little vessel began to roll

so heavily that Eudora was driven below for safety. Malcolm guided her down into the cabin.

The wind was now so high that they were compelled to take in the sails, and the voice of the captain was heard shouting at the head of the cabin stairs:

"For God's sake, Mr. Montrose, come up and help us, or we are lost."

Malcolm secured Eudora as well as he could, and hurried up on deck to render assistance.

The storm came on apace. The sky was now as dark as night. The froth-capped waves rushed like foaming steeds before the lashing of the wind.

The little vessel, driven back on her course, was forced to tack and scud under bare poles before the gale, and towards the coast from whence she had sailed but a few hours ago. All the afternoon the little craft, struggling bravely for her life, was driven furiously before the winds and waves.

As evening deepened, the sky darkened to a blacker hue, and the gale increased in violence. The captain and his mate never left the deck for an instant. Malcolm gave all the aid he could, but went below occasionally to reassure Eudora.

"I am not afraid, dear Malcolm. How could any one who has passed through what I have, be afraid of anything else that could happen in this world? Go on deck and help to save the vessel, and think no more of me," was her constant answer.

Ah! she did not know that they were being driven swiftly back upon the coast of England, to which they were already fearfully near.

The night was now dark as the grave. Not a ray of light was to be seen, except the phosphorescent sparkling of the leaping waves. On—on—the little vessel plunged through the black fury of the tempest. The men had lost all control over her, and merely waited for death, while she

was whirled, tossing and pitching, now whelming in the black waves, now lifted towards the sky, and ever carried onward towards the lee shore. While fate was thus imminent, Malcolm had brought Eudora from the cabin, and bound her firmly to himself, so as to leave his limbs free for struggling with the waves. And thus they awaited their doom. At length it came. The vessel was slowly lifted on a mighty wave, and dashed with a stupendous shock upon the sands; and in the same instant all were struggling for life in the black and furious waves.

Malcolm was a strong swimmer; but he never could explain, because he never knew, how he and his companion reached the shore that terrible night.

He only knew that while the black chaos still roared around him, he found himself high on the beach, stunned and exhausted, with the dripping and drowned form of Eudora in his arms.

Fishermen from the cliffs above were hurrying down with lanterns to render assistance to the shipwrecked mariners.

Two of these came towards him and with homely words of sympathy, took charge of him and his drowned Eudora, and bore them off to a cottage on the cliff.

"She is dead! quite dead!" moaned Malcolm, in a voice of despair that sounded like content, as he gazed upon the cold, still form that the fisherman's wife had laid upon the rude cottage bed.

"Not she, sir; we'll bring her to presently, if you'll go in t'other room and leave her to us," said the kind dame.

Malcolm turned into the kitchen, where the fisherman supplied him with a suit of dry clothes and a glass of brandy that had never lost its flavor by passing through the custom-house.

And then, while Malcolm sat before the kitchen fire, waiting anxiously to hear some report of Eudora's state, the fisherman relighted his lantern and went out to see what further aid he could render to the sufferers. After an

absence of half an hour he returned, and seating himself beside his guest, inquired:

"How many on you might ha' been aboard that craft, master?"

Malcolm informed him.

"Well, then they're all landed alive."

"Thank God!"

"Aye; but whether they are all saved, that is another matter, master. Some on 'em are badly hurt; and one on 'em mos' particular badly hurt, poor fellow! nigh upon killed, I should think. He's lying in the next cottage."

Malcolm uttered some few words of sympathy, but his whole heart was with Eudora. He could think of no one else. At length the fisherman's wife appeared to relieve his anxiety. "The young lady had come round," she said, "and had inquired after the gentleman, and being told that he was safe and well, she had taken a quieting drink and gone to sleep. And now could the gentleman do better than to follow her example? There was a good bed in the room up stairs that was heartily at his honor's service."

Malcolm thanked the woman, and followed the man, who led him up stairs, to a humble attic, where he stretched himself upon a hard bed. But notwithstanding the weariness and exhaustion of his body, the excitement and anxiety of his mind kept him from sleep until near morning, when he was aroused by a loud knocking at his door. It was the fisherman, who entered, deprecatingly saying:

"Excuse *me*, master, but *might* your name be Mr. Montrose?"

"Yes; what is the matter?" demanded the young man, in a voice so startled as to seem angry, for he dreaded some evil to Eudora.

"Why, then, master, the poor man as were so badly hurt last night, which we think he is dying, is very particular anxious to see you, sir."

"Which of them is he? What is his name?

"Antony More, sir."

"Antonio Morio!" exclaimed Malcolm, springing from the bed, and quickly preparing to visit the dying man, whom ten minutes after he found lying upon a poor cot in the next hut.

"What can I do for you?" inquired Malcolm, seating himself beside the man.

"First send all these people from the room, as our interview must be a private one, answered Morio, or More, as we shall hereafter call him.

Malcolm made a sign to the fisherman's family, who withdrew from sight only to plant themselves at convenient listening-posts without.

"They say the poor young lady is saved from the wreck. Is it true?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad to be sure about it; for if she had escaped to France, or if she had perished in the waves, I should have died and made no sign. I should have been faithful to the friend who has ruined me, even though she would have consummated that ruin in death, and offered me up the last of the holocaust of victims sacrificed to her evil passions. But now that that poor girl is thrown again upon these shores, to suffer for another's crimes, and that I am dying, I dare not carry to the grave the secret that might save her; or face my Judge with her innocent blood on my soul!"

Malcolm bent over the dying man, and listened with suspended breath, fearing to ask a question, or to make an observation, lest he should arrest the confession that was trembling on his lips.

"The theologians are all wrong in supposing the great principal evil to be a male—it is a female Satan is a woman—I am sure of it, and many another man must know it also. An evil woman gains a spell over a man's senses, and then a power over his soul, that is like diabolical magic. The man may know her, scorn her, hate her, but he cannot

escape from her. Sometimes he goes mad and kills her, and gets himself hanged for it, and finds freedom, purchased even at that price, an infinite relief. Such an ascendancy one fatal woman gained over me. For years I have been her dupe, her slave, her tool. She has been my god, for at her command I have broken all the laws of the Divine One—all, all! At her command I would have

"'Marched to death as to a festival!'"

The man paused from exhaustion; but after a few moments of silence, continued:

"Why she wished to destroy the house of Leaton I do not know, but I became her blind tool in that work of destruction——"

"Name this woman!" exclaimed Malcolm, under his breath.

"I cannot; I know neither her name nor her country. She bears half a dozen aliases, and speaks with equal facility half a dozen modern languages—"

"You mean the Italian Princess Pezzilini?"

"I mean the mysterious woman who has successfully imposed herself upon a few guileless country families as that illustrious lady. I first met her many years ago at Rome, where I was in the suite of the English Ambassador, and she in the household of the Princess Gentillescha Pezzilini. When the Palazza Pezzilini was burned by the mob, she purloined the family jewels and papers, and fled with me to Paris, where, with the aid of her documents, she succeeded in passing herself upon Lord Leaton's retired circle as the illustrious lady who had really perished in the burning palace She accompanied them to England, bringing me in her train. You know what followed. Why she wished to exterminate the whole race of her benefactors from the face of the earth, I never knew. She used me without trusting me, or confided in me only so far as was ab-

solutely needful. And when she had no further use for me, she turned her death-dealing powers against me to get me out of the way. Death was dealt to me insidiously, slowly, and cautiously; but still I knew that it *was* death, and that it came from her hand. Even then I was too much under her spell to denounce her; but I escaped from her, and fled for my life when I embarked in the vessel. Judge how glad I was that the poor innocent girl was escaping too!"

"But to do that young lady justice, you are aware that this confession must be made on oath before a magistrate, in the presence of witnesses, with every circumstantial detail, and reduced to writing."

"I know that, and have already sent to summon the proper persons," moaned the man, who now seemed thoroughly exhausted.

Malcolm gave him drink. And in a few minutes afterwards a justice of the peace, attended by his clerk, arrived at the hut. A magistrate in a populous district is inured to startling revelations. Therefore this worthy justice sat calmly through the terrible statement made upon oath by the dying man, and reduced to writing by the clerk. The document was signed by Antony More, and witnessed by Malcolm Montrose and another.

The necessary warrants were then issued, and the magistrate departed, leaving a constable in charge of the dying witness, whom the doctors pronounced unfit for removal.

Malcolm Montrose hurried to the cottage where Eudora lay concealed, to comfort her with news of the revelation that would completely vindicate her fair fame.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE DENOUEMENT.

"And well my folly's meed you gave,
Who forfeited, to be your slave,
All here and all beyond the grave!
You saw another's face more fair,
You knew her of broad lands the heir,
Forgot your vows, your faith forswore,
And I was then beloved no more."

THE whole conversation at Abbeytown turned upon the subject of the accident at the prison. It was well ascertained that the fire had originated in the clothes-room. But the flames had been extinguished before any very material damage was done to the building. No one was injured, and no one was missing, except Eudora Leaton, who was supposed to have perished in the flames or to have escaped in the confusion.

Annella Wilder, on her fevered bed, raved of conflagrations and tempests, and deadly perils by fire or flood. And the two old ladies scolded all the women for mentioning the burning prison in her presence.

"For how could she have known anything about it but for their gabbling in the sick room?" inquired Mrs. Stilton.

The admiral was divided between anxiety for the recovery of his granddaughter and aspiration for the love of the Princess Pezzilini! Yes, despite his own bitter matrimonial reminiscences, his threescore years, and the constant supervision of the two sybils, "that boy" had become the bond-slave of the Italian princess. In addition to the beauty, accomplishments, and fascination of the woman, there were other strong reasons for this infatuation. The admiral, like most self-made men, had a

profound veneration for hereditary greatness. And her assumed title of "princess," even though it only represented the ill-defined rank of an *Italian* princess, threw a halo over the Pezzilini that enhanced her value a hundredfold.

Then the admiral was of an heroic temper, and her perilous adventures charmed his mind. He was also excessively benevolent, and her misfortunes melted his heart.

Thus it happened that the admiral was kneeling at the feet of the "princess," in the recess of the bay window, when the officers arrived with the warrant for her "highness's" arrest.

The "princess" was calmly incredulous; the household were astonished; the admiral was furious! It was a mistake, an absurdity, an outrage; but the persecuted princess was in England, the land of civil and religious liberty, thank Heaven! and should have justice done her, so he said.

He ordered out his own carriage to take her before the magistrate, and insisted on escorting her. The officers made no objection to these arrangements, stipulating only that they should occupy the remaining two seats in the carriage, so as to keep their charge in view. In this manner the *soi-disant* princess was taken to the town-hall, where the magistrates were then sitting. The examination occupied a very long time, yet the case was so clearly made out against the adventuress that she was fully committed for trial. And the same day a report of the proceedings was dispatched to the Home Secretary, with a petition in behalf of Eudora Leaton, falsely convicted of poisoning her uncle's family, and reported missing since the fire. This was met by a respite of the sentence until after the trial of Madame Pezzilini should either confirm or refute the testimony upon which the latter had been indicted.

The assizes was still in session, and the trial was fixed for an early day.

Antony More, to the surprise of every one, survived his

great injuries, and was able to appear in the court as a witness against her. His testimony was clear, conclusive, and corroborated by certain facts produced in evidence. The trial occupied three days, at the end of which the self-styled princess was convicted and sentenced. She received her doom with the cool self-possession she had displayed throughout the whole proceedings. Only once she betrayed a momentary emotion. Throughout her short imprisonment she had been frequently visited by an elderly woman, whose relations to her were unknown Soon after being placed in the condemned cell, she was visited by this woman, upon whose bosom she threw herself in a transient burst of feeling.

"Do nothing rash, my mother—my most injured mother. Keep your own counsel, for I will never betray you!"

The next instant she was as calm and self-possessed as ever, but the wardress had overheard her words.

When the visitor had departed, the prisoner was carefully searched by the women, but no instrument of self-destruction was found upon her, and she was permitted at last to lie down and rest, guarded by the wardress.

On the night succeeding the conviction of the strange adventuress, the Lord Chief Baron Elverton was seated alone in his apartment at the Leaton Arms, pondering over the subject of the most inexplicable criminal trial at which he had ever presided; for though the guilt of the accused had been established to the satisfaction of the jury, yet her motive for the deed was still a deep mystery.

Jealousy, revenge, avarice, ambition, the usual incentives to such crimes, seemed totally wanting in this case, and why she had exterminated her benefactor's family was still a secret.

While the baron pondered over this subject, the door was opened and a visitor announced.

It was a woman of majestic appearance, clothed in deep mourning and closely veiled.

She advanced to the table, at which he was seated, and threw aside her veil. And oh, what a countenance was there revealed!

It was a fine face, still bearing the vestiges of magnificent beauty, but it was the thunder-blasted beauty of the ruined archangel!

"Again!" cried the baron, with a shudder of horror, as he met her dark, splendid eyes, now blazing with the fires of insanity.

"Ay, again! for the third and last time since your sin, I stand before you, Baron Elverton!" replied the stranger.

"In the name of Heaven, what is your will with me?

"To sum up—*just judge!*"

"I know not what you mean beyond this, that it must be some new diabolism!"

"Do you know who you have condemned to death to-day?"

"No, beyond the fact that she was an adventuress with a half dozen aliases, a murderess, who merited breaking upon the wheel rather than any milder form of death!"

"Ah, she was very wicked, was she not?"

"A double-dyed, diabolical traitor to destroy her benefactors, and without even any apparent motive for the deed!"

"But perhaps she could not help it. Treachery and ingratitude were hereditary with her, were in her blood, were given to her at her birth."

"What dark meaning now lurks under your words?"

"Listen, Baron Elverton, while I tell you. More years ago than I care to count, the sinful woman who confronts you now for the last time was a sinless child—the only child of a poor old widowed country curate. She became, at seventeen years of age, the nursery governess of your little sisters. You saw and admired her beauty. You made her your wife by a secret marriage."

"Woman! why do you recall these follies after all these years?"

"To lead to the end! You made Harriette Newton your wife by a clandestine marriage, but you were a few months under age, and the marriage was not binding unless you should choose to make it so after your majority. Alas! before that time arrived you had repented of your 'low' marriage, and grown tired of the humble woman whose peace you had destroyed. When your secret was discovered you humbled yourself to your offended father; you promised never to see the 'girl' again; you suffered her to be sent back with ignominy to break the heart of *her* father, for the poor old curate never held up his head again; he died before his daughter became a mother—"

"Harriette, I was a boy then—"

"A boy with the hardened heart of a veteran sinner! Your father died; you came into your estates; and I, with my daughter in my arms, threw myself at your feet, and entreated you to acknowledge us as your wife and child—"

"And then I would have done it, Harriette."

"Aye, for a moment nature made herself heard above the clamor of pride, ambition, selfishness! You would have yielded, you would then and there have restored us to our places in your heart and home, but you were prevented!"

"Aye, I was prevented!"

"And who was it that hindered you in that act of justice? Your bosom friend and confidant, *Henry Lord Leaton!* He it was who, in that moment of your better feelings, laid his hand upon your shoulder, and bade you pause and reflect; told you that marriage with an inferior was always a snare and a curse to both parties; that I was unfitted for the sphere of life to which you would have raised me; that by such a marriage you would be humiliated and wretched, and I misplaced and miserable; bade you remember the fate of the 'Ladye of Burleigh,' and

take warning, and advised you to repudiate and provide for us! 'Provide for us!' I think even *he* saw that I would have seen my child slowly starve to death in my arms rather than have taken one crumb from the father who refused to acknowledge her as his legitimate daughter!" exclaimed the woman, with her eyes suddenly kindling.

"He was a high-toned, honorable man; he meant well by you and me."

"Especially by me and my child, whom he consigned to a life of misery, dishonor and reproach!" said the woman, in withering scorn. "Enough! by his advice and his assistance, you succeeded in annulling your juvenile marriage and repudiating your wife and child! Once more we are turned from your door. I had a long illness, during which, I think, my soul must have left my body, and the spirit of a fiend entered it. For, a loving, suffering, forgiving woman, I fell into that fever, but I arose from it the avenger of my own sex, the destroyer of yours!"

He knew that her words were the ravings of insanity, and yet they seemed to curdle his blood.

She continued:

"Were there not fallen angels enough in this pandemonium of a world that you might have spared the poor old curate's little daughter? What excuse had you for her destruction? Love? Bah! Love does not destroy its object! Passion? Passion is of the soul, and your soul was smothered in selfishness even in your infancy! You feel a single glow of human love or passion, who from boyhood have been a monster of egotism! But I did not come here to deal in invective—I came to wind up accounts with you for ever. Enough that I arose from that bed of illness a spirit prepared for any work of evil! Every door was closed against me—every road barred except that which leads down to death and perdition! I do not intend

to amuse you, baron, with the life of a lost spirit. I was not far from you on that grand day when you led the Lady Elfrida Gaunt to the altar; and my curse that arose to Heaven interrupted the marriage benediction. I was near you also on that other proud day, when bonfires blazed and bells were rung, and oxen roasted in honor of the christening of your heir, and my curse neutralized the blessing of the babe. Then I pressed my own discarded child to my heart, and recorded a vow of vengeance upon two men and all their race, even though it should take me a long lifetime to work it out. How long I pursued you secretly, how often I failed, need not here be told. One day I found myself in Paris, among congenial spirits, where a career opened before me; where evil is organized into a per ect working system, having its constitution and by-laws—its forms of government and schools of training—its lovely girls and handsome boys, educated into accomplished women and men to become the sirens and satyrs of society. Of this secret band I became a member. Men called me beautiful and gifted. I went upon the stage, not from necessity, but to facilitate my intercourse with a certain set of wealthy dupes, for I still continued a bond member of the secret society. Years passed and I became a celebrity. At last I met the aged and decrepit General de la Comte. He offered me marriage and I accepted him. He had a daughter but a few months younger than my own. He died in the second year of our marriage, leaving me to bring up the two girls. When these young women had reached a marriageable age, your son, grown to manhood, appeared in Paris—"

Here the woman paused, and looked wistfully into the blanched face of the old man; then, with a dreadful smile, she said:

"But you know the story—"

"Woman of Belial, yes!"

"But you do not know whom you have doomed to death to-day."

"Ha! There is something more than meets the ear in this reiterated question! Whom do you mean?"

"Your own daughter! She who, but for your black treachery, would now be ruling in your halls, heiress of Elverton, instead of lying in a prison-cell, a convicted felon!"

"Great Heaven! this is most horrible! But then—but then—if this story is true, the communication that you made to my unhappy son, upon that fatal night which drove him in madness from his home, a fugitive and a wanderer over the face of the earth, and turned the fair home into a Gehenna of remorse and despair was false—must have been utterly false!" exclaimed the baron, in uncontrollable agitation between the horror he felt at being told that the criminal he had just condemned to death was his own discarded daughter, and the joy that rushed upon him with the thought that another and a deeper curse was removed from his house.

His condition between these two excessive and antagonistic emotions bordered upon insanity.

"Ah!" muttered the woman to herself, with an expression of perplexity and pain traversing her fine features as she passed her hand over her brow; "I did not mean to betray that fact; but my brain! my brain; I am not well!"

"Harriette!" exclaimed the baron, excited beyond all measure, as he arose and dropped his hand upon her shoulder, "Harriette, as you hope for God's pardon in your dying hour—"

"I do *not* hope for his pardon!" interrupted the woman, gloomily.

"TELL ME, who is she that lies doomed to death in yonder cell?" demanded the baron, without noticing her interruption.

"I have told you! your daughter and mine! the rightful heiress of Elverton, if justice had been done!"

"And she whom my son married—"

"I have unwillingly betrayed that secret too! take it, since you have it! Your son's wife is the daughter of the late General de la Compte, by his first wife, and was, therefore, *not* within the prohibited degree of kindred according to the marriage code. Our daughter never married; she was destined to another doom; to work her mother's will; to avenge her mother's wrongs. For this I kept her always near me; won her whole heart; absorbed her will; mastered her spirit. Whatever she has done in this world has been done for me, and often blindly by her. She had but one human affection—filial love. To-day the daughter stood before the father's face to receive from him the doom of death. But the doom was unmerited."

"Woman! what do you tell me?"

"She was guiltless of the death of the Leatons!"

"Who, then, was the destroyer?"

"*I!*" shouted the monomaniac. "I, THE AVENGER! I, who, in the same hour that I turned away from your triumphant wickedness, with my discarded child pressed to my bleeding heart—I who, in the same hour that was transformed from a woman to a fiend, vowed a vow of exterminating wrath against two men, with all their race, and sold my soul to Satan for the power of accomplishing the work! Had not Satan failed me at the last, the race of Leaton would have been extinguished in blood and shame. That of Elverton would have lived in misery and dishonor—worse than death and perdition."

"Woman, you wildly rave! Come to your senses—collect yourself, explain; you say that your daughter was guiltless; that *you* were the criminal; if this is not a mere trick to attempt to defeat the ends of justice, how do you explain away the direct evidence of Antony More, who swore that he was employed by the so-called Princess

Pezzilini to procure the drugs of which the Leatons died!" inquired Lord Elverton, who, amidst all the violent emotion that shook the bosom of the man retained the mental calmness of the judge,

"Antony More was a fool and a beast; the slave of a slave; the mere tool of her who was but the tool of her mother. I put into the hands of my daughter a card with the name of the drug I wanted written upon it. I said to her, 'Give this card to your dog, Antonio, and tell him to procure the drug secretly and bring it to you; when you get it, pass it secretly to me.' This was done. Afterwards, she privately admitted me to the house on various occasions by night; and so the work was accomplished; and the last Leaton would have perished on the scaffold for the murder of the others, but that Satan failed me at the very last! It was necessary to get rid of Antony More; but I was not quick enough about it. He took the alarm and fled, and you know the result—a shipwreck, a confession, and the arrest, trial, and conviction of Agnes. But Agnes is guiltless! guiltless even of purloining the jewels and documents of the Princess Gentilescha Pezzilini, which were really given into my hands for safe custody during the time of trouble; and only after the burning of the palace and the death of the princess were they used by me for the furtherance of our plans. For the rest, whatever Agnes might have suspected, she never certainly knew why I wanted the *Fabæ Sancta Ignatii*, or for what purpose I kept myself concealed in the neighborhood and gained admittance to the abbey only in the dead of night. That dolt, Antony More, complained that she never took him into her confidence! How could she, when she had nothing to confide to him? But she is guiltless, and must not perish! She was the only human creature that was ever true to me; but she must not die for me! Baron Elverton, I came here to denounce myself as the destroyer of the Leaton family! You know your duty; do it!"

"Yes," he said, "whether you are mad or sane, it is equally necessary that you should be placed in custody; and to-morrow this affair shall be investigated. If your unfortunate daughter should be proved really guiltless, justice must be done her at any cost to myself or to you! And you, wretched woman! must take your chance between the doom of death and the living grave of Bedlam!" said the Baron, as he rang the bell and summoned the proper officers.

And ten minutes afterwards the woman was in custody of the police.

Early the next morning inquiries were set on foot. They were too late to avail the unhappy, blind instrument of a mother's vengeance. The *soi-disant* Princess Pezzilini was found dead in her bed. A small locket ring, that fitted tightly upon her finger, was open; but instead of some minute likeness of a friend's face, or small lock of a lover's hair, it contained only a tiny glass cavity, which being subjected to scientific experiments, was supposed to have contained a certain deadly poison, one drop of which was sufficient to have produced instantaneous dissolution.

Yes, "like the scorpion girt with fire," she had stung herself to death!

In due time the criminals were brought to justice and paid the penalty of their crimes.

When the turbulent emotions excited by these later events had somewhat subsided, Malcolm Montrose and Eudora Leaton were quietly married at the village church.

Annella Wilder, who had recovered from her severe illness, attended as bridemaid. Norham Montrose officiated as best man. Admiral Sir Ira Brunton gave the bride away.

After the ceremony they set out immediately for Southampton, whence they sailed for India, where Montrose had received a high official appointment, and where, for the further restoration of Eudora's peace of mind, he had determined to fix their future residence.

Up to the hour of their departure one trouble had weighed upon the mind of Malcolm. That grief remained unspoken, yet found its most eloquent expression in the earnest gaze he sent into Annella's eyes as he pressed her hand in a last adieu. She understood, and replied to his look, by saying:

"I know what it is that you would say if you dared! but you are widely mistaken. *I did not set fire to the prison!* Not even to have saved Eudora's precious life would I have endangered hundreds of other lives. No, desperate as my plan of rescue was, it was not so criminal as that! What the nature of my original project was it is needless now to say, since it was forestalled by accident. It is enough for me to admit that I had concealed myself in the building that night for the purpose of carrying out my plan of rescue when the alarm of fire startled me as well as others. My first thought was of Eudora and her safety, and I was rushing through the black and suffocated lobby, in which her cell was situated, when I was met by the governor, who, in the double darkness of night and thick smoke, mistook me for the only person who had any business there—Nally, the old turnkey of that ward. Thus I got possession of the key of the cell, and was enabled to keep my word with you. I did it without crime. Take that comfort to India with you."

"God bless you, Annella!" exclaimed Malcolm drawing a deep inspiration with a sense of infinite relief, as he pressed her hand and bade her farewell.

The long-severed pair of Edenlawn—long-severed through the cruelest misrepresentation—were at length re-united. The world, who neither knew the cause of their severance nor of their re-union, ascribed both to caprice; but the contented family at Edenlawn cared little for its misapprehension.

Strong suspicion of foul play on the part of the unfortunate and guilty Madame de la Compte had brought

Hollis Elverton again to England, but her cunning had baffled his unaided attempts at investigation, while the very nature of his wrongs prevented him from calling in the aid of the detective police, and thus accident alone brought the guilty to justice.

With the full approbation of their mutual friends, Norham Montrose and Alma Elverton were married, and, at the desire of all parties, fixed their abode at Edenlawn, where Alma's "hunger of the heart" is at length fully satisfied, for in her the circle of human love is complete. She lives in the rich enjoyment of father's, mother's, husband's, and children's affection. She is the centre of their household, the darling of all hearts and eyes, the consolation even of the grave old man, who, retired from official life, passed his time in reading, prayer, meditation, and deeds of mercy, and who is less proud of Alma as his heiress, and the future Baroness of Elverton, than fond of her as a good and lovely woman.

The last marriage that we have to record is that of Lieutenant Valerius Brightwell, R. N., and Miss Annella Wilder, which took place quite recently with great *eclat*. As the young couple were the joint heirs of Admiral Brunton, and as the bride was very young, and the bridegroom on the point of sailing on a distant service, it was arranged that they should fix their permanent residence at the Anchorage; and so, should old Mrs. Stilton be still unable "to conquer her chronic malady of living," we shrink from surmising how many degrees of descendants she may have to look down upon.

Mrs. Corder and her thirteen children are made comfortable by the liberality of Eudora. The worthy little widow owns the neatly-furnished house and the well-stocked shop in which she lives happily and does a flourishing business. Her elder children are apprenticed to profitable trades, and the younger ones are put to good schools. Mrs. Corder was always so happy, even in her adversity, that

she could scarcely be said to be more so now in her prosperity.

Allworth Abbey remains untenanted, closely shut up and in charge of the housekeeper, Mrs. Vose, who prefers to live at the lodge, and who will not even be bribed to show the inside of the building,—no, not even to the most curious and importunate of tourists.

The Barony of Leaton remains in abeyance.

Malcolm Montrose, on the part of his wife, draws the large revenues of the Abbey estates that are flourishing under the care of an able steward.

Whether Mr. Montrose will ever advance his wife's claim to the Barony of Leaton, or whether Eudora will ever have nerve enough to return to the scene of her terrible sorrows, remains an open question

In the sunny land of her birth she is in the possession of all the happiness she is capable of enjoying—the love of a devoted husband, beautiful children, and faithful friends; an honorable position, an ample fortune, and good health. As for the rest, the scars of those early, deep wounds, they may possibly never be effaced in this world. As long as she lives on earth, perhaps some subjects and some memories will cause her cheek to blanch and her blood to curdle with a deadly soul-sickness; but we commend her, with all the stricken in heart and wounded in spirit to that Benignant Power, which being "almighty to create," is also ALMIGHTY TO RENEW.

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*"Hans Breitmann gife a barty—dey had biano-blayin;*
*I felled in lofe mit a Merican frau, her name was Madilda Yane.*
*She hat huar as prown ash a pretzel, her eyes vas himmel-plue,*
*Und ven dey looket indo mine, dey shplit mine heart in two."*

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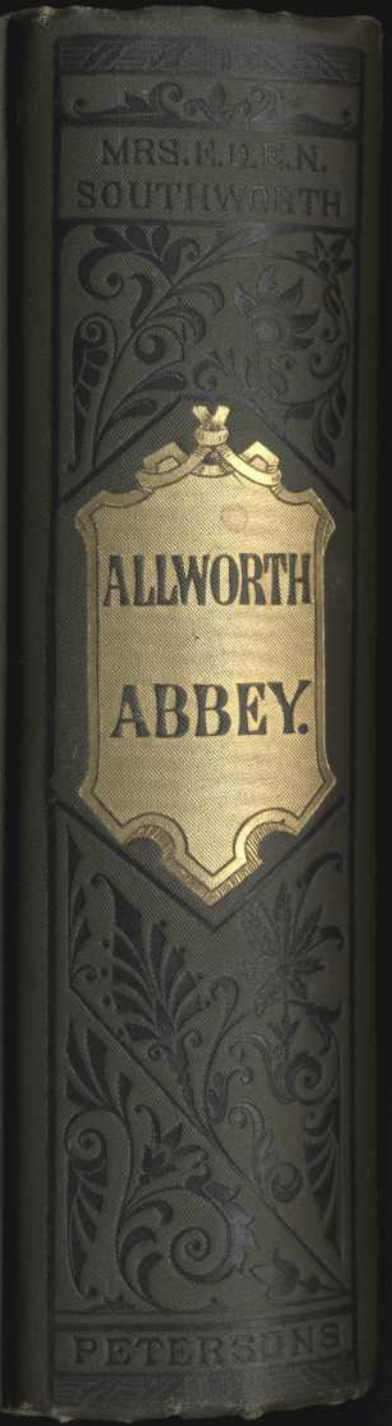
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